

All Of Our Memories Ahead

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/37792681) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/37792681>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Video Blogging RPF
Relationship:	Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Minor or Background Relationship(s)
Character:	Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Soulmates , Red String of Fate , Platonic Soulmates , Romantic Soulmates , Fluff , Angst , Slow Burn , Friends to Lovers , Angst with a Happy Ending , Canon Compliant , Found Family , DreamNotFound Week DNF Week 2022 , side karlnap
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-03-17 Words: 70056

All Of Our Memories Ahead

by [BirbWatcher](#)

Summary

Dream has four soulmates that he knows of so far. His mom and sister were obvious, and when he met Sapnap aged 13 at Disneyland, neither of them were surprised when a yellow thread instantly connected them, marking them as platonic soulmates

When Dream meets George online a few years later, he's sure that they must be soulmates too, somehow, in some way

But Dream already has a red thread to mark his romantic soulmate, tied to a stranger he never properly met. A stranger who can't possibly be George

Notes

Happy birthday to my wonderful friend Charlotte! I hope you enjoy this fic I have cobbled together for you from our various conversations about dnf headcanons <3 Sorry it's late, it grew a lot longer than I expected and I didn't want to rush it so I ended up finishing it for DNF week (day 4: finish your WIP!)

This entire fic is inspired by that one stream where Dream talks about soulmates and how Sapnap and George are his missing puzzle pieces. It's mostly canon compliant (I messed around with the timeline though) and red strings of fate exist - for both platonic and romantic soulmates. Endgame of this fic is romantic dnf though! One day I will write aspec dnf but today is not that day

TW/A quick note: This fic involves some difficult familial relationships and if you're sensitive to issues around that, here is a tw. Proceed with caution. Obviously, this is all entirely fictional and in no way related to actual Dream/George/Sapnap's relationships with their families, because I do not know what those are like. I just wanted to write a found family fic

Massive thanks to my other wonderful friend Jane for helping me with plotting!

Title from 'Yet' by Duncan Laurence

A playlist I made for this fic: [spotify](#)

Come find me on [tumblr](#) and [twitter](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Dream was slain by GeorgeNotFound.

Dream heaved a sigh when the chat lit up on his minecraft screen, fingers pausing over his keyboard. George's laughter bubbled through his headphones, the sound achingly familiar, and Dream could picture very well what he looked like even though George wasn't streaming just then - head thrown back, eyes screwed shut, giant grin taking over half of his face.

"*George*," Dream huffed, tone berating. "I told you *not* to kill me."

"You were right there!" George defended himself, still breathless with laughter. "And I'm still getting you back for the, like, fifty times you killed me last game—"

"It wasn't *fifty*, don't exaggerate."

"It was close to fifty."

"No it wasn't, idiot." Dream sighed, affectionate even as he clicked to reload the game and found himself all the way back at spawn. Thank goodness they weren't recording - just messing around testing out a new plugin George had coded, checking to see how well it worked for a future challenge video. So far Dream thought it had potential, and it wasn't anywhere near as annoying or laggy as the multiple mob drops videos had been.

"Where did you end up?" George asked, his voice slightly tinny - he was using the mic on his headphones, not the one he had set up for streams, seeing as it was just them on the call. Dream could tell that George was in his bedroom, slouched on his desk chair in his tiny London flat, half a world away.

He ached to be in the same space as him, but pushed the familiar feeling away.

"Wait, are you at *spawn*?" George said incredulously. "Didn't you set a bed?!"

"No, George, I didn't, because you *killed me* before I had a chance." Dream allowed himself a wry smirk, setting off through the forest biome back towards the desert where he'd left George.

"You'd better hurry up or I'm gonna get everything from this temple before you get here."

“Save my stuff, idiot!” Dream whined, risking a high jump down from a tree. He winced when he took more damage than planned.

George laughed, the sound high-pitched and warm. “Can’t, but I’ll save some of this temple stuff for you - I need to check the code anyway.”

“Save me *everything* from the temple, we only found it because of me.”

“Yeah, yeah.” George’s voice turned slightly distant, and Dream could hear his fingers typing on his keyboard - probably playing with the code. Dream smiled. He liked listening to George work. Their friendship began, initially, because Dream had heard about this cool older guy on the same server who knew how to code properly, who even went to *uni* for it, which was far further than Dream’s clunky self-taught skills ever took him.

Little had he known back then that George was an even bigger nerd than he was.

“George,” Dream said after a few minutes of silence, finally cresting the top of a mountain to find the desert spreading out below his minecraft character again. “I’m back, where are you?”

It took George a few seconds to respond. “Hm?”

“George, I’m at the desert. Where did you go?”

“Gimme a sec, Dream.”

Dream pursed his lips, tapping his fingers on his desk impatiently. “You *killed me*, sent me all the way back to spawn, didn’t collect my stuff, and now you’re making me *wait*? What is wrong with you today?”

“Calm down, Dream,” George laughed, keyboard still clacking through Dream’s headphones. “We can’t record anything until Sapnap gets on, anyway.”

“He’s gonna be *ages*.”

“Exactly, so I have time to fix this code. It was a bit buggy when the creeper came over.”

Dream huffed, leaning back in his desk chair and folding his arms. He left his minecraft character on top of a tree, staring out at the desert, completely immobile - night wasn’t far for a few more minutes anyway. He pursed his lips.

“Are you pouting at me?” George asked, amused, after a few minutes of quiet.

Dream forced his face into a neutral expression. “No.”

“I can *hear* that you were, idiot.”

“Shut up, that’s not a thing.”

“Oh my God.” George laughed, the sound breathy in Dream’s headphones just as George’s minecraft character appeared in the distance on Dream’s screen. “Get down from there, you big baby.”

Dream felt a smile tugging at his lips despite himself, sitting up in his chair to return to the game. He navigated his character down from the tree and switched to his sword, immediately starting to hit George.

“Get away, idiot!” George shrieked, hitting back, and Dream started laughing.

“Serves you right for killing me.”

“You killed me *so much more*, Dream - Dream, no, stop - seriously, *STOP—!*”

Dream cackled, dodging when George landed a hit that lowered his hearts down to three, and then felt a sharp tug on his finger. Dream startled, glancing down at his hands on his keyboard, and saw the yellow thread on the middle finger of his left hand pulling at his skin, leaving faint white lines.

Sapnap’s thread.

Dream smiled. “Nick’s home.”

“Huh?” George paused in his assault on Dream’s minecraft character. “What did you say?”

“Nick will be on in a second.” Dream turned back to his screen, letting out a yelp when he saw that George had reduced him to half a heart. “*George*, what did you do?! If you kill me *again—*”

“I’ve stopped now.” There was a slight edge to George’s tone that Dream recognised - a hard, jagged tremor that appeared whenever they touched on the topic of soulmates. “You can feel him all the way from Texas?”

Dream licked his lips, thinking through his answer. The yellow thread on his finger that marked Sapnap as one of his platonic soulmates was still moving, pulling insistently against his skin, and he reached up with his right hand to soothe over the sharp sensation. “It’s been easier to feel him recently.”

“Oh.”

“My mom says it’s because we’ve been getting closer,” Dream explained, wishing he could see George’s face. “I’ve still only met him once in person, so over the years the connection faded, but then we’ve been talking so much more recently that sometimes I can feel the thread pulling even when he’s miles away.”

Silence fell between them, not awkward, just familiar. Dream stared at his hands, studying the few threads that were visible - yellow for platonic soulmates, red for romantic. Dream had four soulmates that he knew of so far. His mom and sister were obvious, their yellow threads tied to his right hand from the day he was born and the day his younger sister arrived in the world, tiny and screaming. When he met Sapnap in person aged 13 in the thick, crowded noise of Disneyland, neither of them were surprised when a yellow thread tied itself to their fingers, linking them together forever.

Dream was more than happy with his platonic soulmates. He might even have more out there, if he ventured out into the world to find them one day, but fear always held him back. Fear that whoever he met wouldn’t match with what - *who* - he really wanted.

Because Dream also had a red thread, tied to a stranger he’d never properly met. A stranger who couldn’t possibly be George.

On the day he turned seven, running through the crowd in New York, breathless with excitement. Dream had begged for weeks to go to the American Museum of Natural History for his birthday in August, and his parents finally relented, taking the whole family on a trip during summer vacation.

The foyer was busy, echoing with loud chatter from all the other tourists - mostly other families, a

lot of kids Dream's age also making the most of their break from school. His dad had disappeared the second they arrived, heading straight to the reception desks, and Dream clung to his little sister and followed his mom and other siblings through the crowd with excitement bubbling in his gut.

An enormous dinosaur skeleton reared above his head in the foyer, fascinating enough for Dream to pause a second. His little sister's hand slipped out of his grasp as he stared in open-mouthed astonishment at ancient bones. The crowd continued to move around him, brushing against his green shirt, his dirty sneakers squeaking on the marble floor.

He'd been standing still when a sudden rush of warmth flooded him from head-to-toe and a red thread latched onto his finger, tightening against his skin.

Dream hadn't really known what it meant at the time - if he had, he would have turned, searching the crowd desperately for the person who must have brushed against him, a touch so fleeting amid a busy, crowded room that Dream didn't even notice it happening. But instead, his seven-year-old self had been transfixed by the dinosaur until his mom appeared back by his side, fingers digging into his wrist while she scolded him.

"Clay, what have I told you about running off?"

"It's a T-Rex!" Dream had announced loudly, pointing up at the skeleton.

His mom sighed, but took a moment to let him look, always too patient with him. "We're going to go around everything once we've got our tickets, but for now we have to find dad and the others, okay?"

Dream had kicked up a fuss, because he was the one that wanted to go to the dinosaur exhibit for his birthday, and surely that meant he could dictate when and where they stopped, but his mom eventually convinced him to rejoin their family at the reception desks with lots of gentle persuasion.

His little sister was the one to notice Dream's brand new soulmate thread.

"Red!" She'd announced proudly, pointing at Dream's left hand, and Dream glanced down and noticed for the first time the red string curled around his finger.

His mom saw it too, dropping to her knees by his side with a quiet gasp. She'd grabbed his hand in obvious disbelief, and he stared at her with a frown furrowing his young face, watching the yellow thread that tied him to her tangle with the other threads she had linking her with his dad and siblings.

"Clay," she whispered eventually. "When did you get this?"

Ever since that day, Dream grew up knowing he had a romantic soulmate out there who he might never meet again.

His mother tried to find the person - in fact, his whole family joined the mission, his dad stopping anyone that passed asking if someone else's child had received their red thread that day while his mom spoke to the museum staff. Dream remembered standing in the middle of a vast room full of ancient exhibits, totally overwhelmed.

He barely understood what was happening, only truly realising the gravity of the situation when his mom sat him down that evening to explain soulmates to him.

Soulmate threads only attached the first time you touched someone. If that person was meant to be part of your life as determined by the universe, then a thread would bind to both your fingers, tying you together in an unbreakable bond. Yellow for a platonic bond, red for romantic. Dream learned that everyone could have any number of each colour, knew of his dad's friend who had three red threads and one yellow, and his mom's sister who only had yellow threads and no red. However, Dream's attraction had always been monogamous and he was fairly sure there was only one romantic soulmate out there for him.

And it couldn't be George.

George, who Dream had always thought must be a destined part of his life somehow. Ever since they'd grown close online, him and George and Sapnap were sure that the three of them were something special, the missing puzzle pieces from each other's lives. Sapnap remained one hundred percent convinced that when he finally met George in person a yellow thread would blossom between them, and for the longest time Dream had thought so, too.

But these days, he wasn't so sure.

These days, when he caught himself rewinding old vods of George's streams, stuck on studying every detail of his face, from the curve of his cupid's bow to the shine of his dark eyes, Dream had to question his own feelings. He didn't think his heart was supposed to race when he watched his best friend effortlessly change the batteries in his headset, or that his chest was supposed to flood with warm fuzz whenever George's expression turned fondly exasperated as he huffed out a sigh of Dream's name.

Dream squashed those feelings every time they tried to surface, stubbornly refusing to address them. They *couldn't* be possible. He'd meet George and a yellow thread would tie them together, because Dream already had his red thread and it wasn't George. George had never been to New York. He'd never seen Dream in real life before - he hadn't even seen a photo. He couldn't be the person on the other end of Dream's red thread.

The thought tore him up inside.

"Can Sapnap feel your thread, too?" George's voice broke through Dream's thoughts, distracting him. He blinked, looking up to see George's immobile minecraft character filling his screen, blocking out the world around them. His heart squeezed.

"Uh, yeah, I think so?" Dream cleared his throat, shaking away the memories clinging to his eyelids. He stubbornly refused to look down at his left hand. "He's called me to tell me to go to bed before, because he could tell I was staying up too late."

"My threads don't really do that."

Dream frowned, confused by the turn this conversation was taking. George never really talked about his soulmate threads.

"Really?" Dream asked, cautious.

"No. I mean, sometimes I think I can tell if my dad is coming over, or when my sister's upset, but..." George let out a quiet sigh. "Nothing like you and Sapnap."

"You haven't met us yet," Dream said without thinking, and the silence after his words was deafening.

Soulmates had always been a touchy subject between them. George was cagey, never revealing

much about his own threads - Dream had gathered over the years that George was threaded to his immediate family, but he didn't know if he had any other threads decorating his fingers. George always wore gloves when he streamed - a precaution that wasn't totally necessary, considering only people he was already threaded to could see the coloured strings. Dream had never questioned it. He knew that George was a private person.

Besides, Dream had never shown George his soulmate threads either. Even though he knew George wouldn't be able to see anything on Dream's fingers but his skin, at least not until they met in person, he was still extra careful, always covering his hands in any pictures he shared. Which were few and far between anyway. Dream wasn't keen on showing his face.

A quiet sound in his headphones signalled someone joining their call, and two seconds later Sapnap's voice echoed loud and clear in Dream's ears.

"What is *up*, guys?!"

"Hey, Nick," Dream said with a smile, trying not to focus on George's continued silence. "How was dinner with your aunt?"

"Boring. Glad I'm home now, I am ready for a *challenge*." Clacking keys sounded harsh in Dream's ears, and then the minecraft chat lit up. *Sapnap has joined the game.* "Where are you guys?"

"In the desert," George said finally, and Dream was relieved to hear that his tone was back to normal. "I just killed Dream again."

"Hey—!" Dream huffed, turning back to his screen only to be met with George attacking him, getting rid of his last half-heart in one fell swoop. He wailed when his screen went red. "George, how *could* you?"

Dream was slain by GeorgeNotFound.

Sapnap cackled. "Wow, Dream can't last two minutes, huh?"

"Shut up, George *betrayed* me." Dream whined when he reappeared back at spawn. "Fuck this, I'm TPing to you."

"Hey, that's cheating!" George complained.

"It's *not*, you have literally killed me *so many times*—"

"Stop bickering for two seconds, can you?" Sapnap interrupted, voice strained with curbed excitement. "I have *good news*."

Dream straightened immediately, chest constricting. "Yeah? Is it about—"

"Moving, yeah." Sapnap's voice grew louder as he leaned closer to his mic, and Dream held his breath. "Told my dad this morning, he just texted on my way home to say he's cool with it."

Dream's heart thudded loudly against his ribs. "So - you mean—"

"Hell yeah! I'm coming to Florida!"

Dream cheered so loud that his throat hurt. Sapnap joined in, yelling incoherent words down the microphone, their mingled voices familiar and excitable in the way Dream had always been with

Sapnap throughout his teen years.

George joined in, softer but present. "That's so awesome, I'm really happy for you."

Dream paused. He could pick up on the slight bitter edge to George's tone, and Dream couldn't blame him - he didn't want to think about the inevitable ache in his chest and twist in his stomach if he ever heard that George was moving in with someone that wasn't them. He cleared his throat, determined not to let George wallow for long. "We need to get started on your visa, then."

"Yep," Sapnap chimed in. "Did you find the form yet?"

"Not yet, Sapnap, it's been three days since we first talked about it," George huffed back, but Dream was pleased when the bitterness was gone from his voice. "Gimme a break."

"Then it's time to start *looking*, because Dream Team house is happening!"

"We'll help," Dream interjected over Sapnap's cheering. "I've looked up some stuff."

George sounded surprised. "You have?"

"Well, yeah." Dream's eyes drifted across to his second monitor, to the open tabs full of hours of research and the half-made google doc he'd started typing up. "Just a bit."

"Simp," George said lightly. "I could have done that myself."

"Yeah, but we all know you'd have put it off for days," Dream defended himself. "And we need to get you to Florida *soon* now that Nick is moving here."

"Hell yeah," Sapnap agreed.

George chuckled, the sound easing the knot in Dream's gut. George sounded at ease again, more relaxed - Dream pictured him leaning back in his chair, resting his chin against his knuckles with tired eyes. It was getting late in England. "Send me the google doc you've inevitably made then, Dream, and I'll start looking into it tomorrow."

Dream bit his lip, not bothering to deny that George was right, and sent the share link over discord.

George laughed again, the sound quiet and gentle. "Thanks."

"I'm gonna leave that admin stuff up to you two," Sapnap said. Dream turned his attention back to his minecraft screen when movement caught his eye, Sapnap's character bounding across the desert towards them. "Show me this plugin, George, let's get going."

George took over, easily settling into the familiar role of talking them through exactly what he'd coded, and Dream zoned out for a bit, already having tested the plugin with George. Recording with his friends never felt like work - they did this in their free time anyway, had done for years - and he could hardly believe he'd somehow landed in a job that meant he got to do this for money. He was forever grateful that his two favourite people in the world had agreed to join him in this rollercoaster of a career; he wouldn't want to do it without them.

"Alright, I think that's everything," George said, pulling Dream's attention back to him and Sapnap. "We should be ready to start recording."

"This is going on my channel, right?" Sapnap checked, and Dream cleared his throat, settling his hands back over his keyboard and mouse.

“Yeah, it feels like a Sapnap-appropriate challenge.”

“Pure chaos,” George added snarkily.

“Hey.”

“What? It’s a *compliment*—”

Dream grinned, listening to his two best friends bicker. The yellow thread on his finger tugged, and Dream stared down at it, at the red thread next to it, and his heart ached for the two people in his headphones.

At least Sapnap wouldn’t be a distant friend for much longer. And neither would George - they’d get him a visa, Dream was sure of it, he wouldn’t rest until he knew that George could join them.

“Okay, that’s enough,” Dream interrupted the ongoing argument after a few minutes, pressing shift repeatedly so his minecraft character bobbed up-and-down between George and Sapnap. “Let’s record before it gets ridiculously late for George.”

“It already is,” George snickered, but obediently calmed down enough for Sapnap to start his introduction.

They whiled away a couple of hours like that, running through the game together and bursting into fits of laughter when the plugin caused them some unforeseen problems. The final product made for a good video, Dream thought.

Sapnap logged off not long after they’d ended the recording, yawning into the mic and mumbling about a long day, but Dream stayed in the quiet static of the call just listening to George typing, the clacking of his keyboard comforting in its familiarity. He could hear George’s quiet breathing, the faint rustle when he lifted his hand to his face to stifle a yawn.

Dream didn’t need a facecam to tell what George looked like, but he still wished he could see him, eyes sleepy and hooded with tiredness.

“You really did a lot of research on this visa stuff, didn’t you?” George said after a few minutes of peaceful quiet.

Dream stirred, slumped in his chair. “Hm?”

“Oh my God, go to bed.” There was a smile in George’s voice. “You sound half-asleep already.”

“No, ‘m’not, ‘m’fine.”

“Uh huh. Go lay down.”

“No,” Dream said stubbornly, but picked up his phone to switch the call over anyway. “Stay on the line.”

“Sure.” George hummed, clicking his mouse while Dream switched to his phone headphones and shut down his computer. “How long did it take you to find out all of this?”

“The visa stuff?”

“Yeah.”

“Not that long.” Dream got to his feet, stretching until his back clicked. He pulled his hoody over

his head and hunted down a pyjama shirt among the pile of clothes tossed carelessly on the floor of his closet. “I just thought I’d start putting some info together, I don’t want to get any of it wrong.”

“Yeah, that would suck.” George continued to scroll quietly, and Dream changed into the shirt and his boxers, crawling under his covers and disturbing a sleeping Patches. “This is the three-month visa, right?”

“Yeah.” Dream stifled a yawn as he settled against his headboard. Patches stared grumpily at him and he petted her head while she resettled against his thigh. “The application doesn’t look too complicated. You’ll need some evidence, but I can help you with that, I’ve got a bunch of stuff saved.”

“It says I’ll need to have return flights booked.”

“I think that’s just so they can prove you won’t be staying forever,” Dream chuckled. “Not yet, at least.”

George went strangely quiet.

Dream furrowed his brow, his sluggish thoughts struggling to understand what was odd about George’s silence. One of his favourite things about their friendship was how easy it was to spend all day in a voice call with George, the hours filled with companionable quiet just as much as with raucous chatter and laughter. Something about the air tonight felt different. Charged.

“You know what, I’m gonna look at this tomorrow,” George said finally, his tone sharp but warm with sleep. “I’m about to pass out.”

“Come lay down with me, then.”

“*Dream.*”

“You know what I mean,” Dream huffed, biting back a smile at George’s faint scoff. “When you’re here I can *actually* make you lie with me. I’ll pull you right down on my bed and bear-hug you so you can’t get away.”

“You will not.” Rustling sounded down the line while George slipped under his own blankets, and Dream bit back a grin.

“I will. You won’t be able to escape once I’ve got you, you’re too small.”

“I am *not* that small.”

“You can sit on my lap, and Sapnap can sit on yours, and Patches can sit on his.” Dream grinned, thinking back to a piece of fanart he’d liked on twitter the other day depicting a scene exactly like that. “Dream Team cuddle pile.”

“You’re ridiculous.” George’s tone was warm with affection, and he sounded sleepy, like syrup - Dream’s favourite version of his voice. “I’m gonna get there and walk straight past you because I have no idea what you look like.”

“I won’t let that happen. I’ll pounce on you as soon as you’re within reach.”

“That sounds terrifying.”

“You’re just a coward,” Dream teased, laying his phone on his pillow by his head and sliding down

until he was wrapped in his sheets. He imagined George in person - standing in front of him, fluffy hair and dark eyes, warm against Dream's chest - and ached with yearning.

He'd grown used to that feeling over the years. Even more so lately.

"Dream," George murmured, his voice thick with sleep.

"Mm?"

"Do you... do you think we'll be soulmates? When we meet?"

Dream's breath caught in his throat. He stared at his phone screen, open on the call, and knew he had to tread very carefully. George got like this sometimes, late at night after a long day spent in each other's virtual presence, all his usual boundaries broken down into a moment of vulnerability. Dream knew not to take advantage.

They never talked about soulmates with each other.

"I think," Dream started, and then stopped, his gaze falling to his hands. The red thread on his ring finger remained static and still.

"You think?" George prompted after a moment, and Dream drew in a careful breath.

"I think that, whatever happens, you're going to be a very important person in my life. Forever."

Silence buzzed between them, Dream's ears filling with quiet birdsong from a different country. Dawn was breaking in England; he needed to stop keeping George up so late.

"Is that a yes, then?" George asked eventually.

A small frown furrowed Dream's brow. He couldn't quite read George's tone - heavy with sleep, but raw and honest enough to make him walk on eggshells.

"You're my person," Dream said instead of answering directly. *Coward.* "You're one of my people, of that I'm completely sure."

Silence again, apart from George's quiet breathing. Dream closed his eyes, pulling one headphone out of his ear so he could roll onto his side, getting comfortable in the quiet of the night. Patches purred against his side.

"I think you're one of my people too," George said after a silence so long that Dream started to drift.

"Hmm?"

"I think we will be. I think I'll touch you and there'll be a thread."

Dream's eyes fluttered open, his brain jolting back to life. He stared at the back of his desk chair, heart kicking against his ribs almost painfully. "You do?"

What colour, he wanted to beg. *What colour, what do you think you are to me, what do you want to be...*

He stared down at his hands again. The red thread lay in perfect stasis, mocking him.

He couldn't think about this. Not when George seemed so close while still so far, while his walls

were down and he let himself be vulnerable in a way George only was with Dream, while Dream dug his fingers into the red thread on his ring finger and wished savagely that his soulmate had never found him as a child.

“I don’t think there’s any way we won’t be threaded,” George breathed, and Dream squeezed his eyes shut.

His heart hurt.

George could be right. They could meet and a yellow thread could tie itself to their fingers, but the thought made Dream want to cry. He’d take George in any way he was allowed to have him, of course he would, but the idea that George wasn’t meant to be his, that he would never know how it felt to hold him at night when they were sleepy like this, to hear his drowsy voice in person, hot breath on his neck, lips on his skin—

He pulled his thoughts away. He shouldn’t think of his best friend like this.

Instead, he asked an inane question he already knew the answer to. “Can you even differentiate the thread colours, George? Red and yellow?”

“Idiot!” George snort-laughed, open and honest. “Of course I can, I can tell the difference between red and yellow. They might not look exactly like *your* version of red and yellow, but I can see which one is which.”

Dream bit his inner cheek, glad to hear amusement in George’s tone. He needed to get away from the charged conversation. He didn’t want to think about George getting his own red thread one day and it *not* attaching to Dream.

George having another person made his stomach twist.

“That’s good,” he answered, praying his tone didn’t sound as strained to George as it did to his own ears. “Wouldn’t want you making a mistake.”

“What kind of mistake?” George teased lightly. “And you still haven’t said if you agree with me. You think we’re going to be soulmates too, right?”

Dream swallowed. Why George was bringing this up *now* he didn’t know - not this late at night, when Dream’s thoughts were sluggish and he couldn’t quite piece together his usual caution around this subject.

“Dream?” George prompted.

Dream sighed and caved. “Yeah. I do.”

He could hear George smiling.

“But now you need to go to sleep,” Dream said, folding his fingers into a fist and shoving his left hand under his pillow so he wouldn’t have to look at his red thread anymore. “You sound like you’re already passed out.”

“I could be, couldn’t I? You’re always telling me I talk in my sleep.”

Horror tightened Dream’s throat at the thought. “Oh my God, don’t say that, you’re being all - soft and emotional right now, I don’t want to talk to you about this stuff while you’re *asleep*.”

George broke into light laughter. "Soft and emotional?"

"You *are*. We never talk about soulmates."

"We don't, huh." George went quiet for a few seconds before continuing, and Dream itched to see his expression, to get a better idea of what he was thinking. "Why do you think that is?"

Dream paused. "Dunno. I kinda always thought you weren't that comfortable with it."

"Mm. I guess I'm not, really."

"Do you want to stop talking about it?"

"Probably should." George muffled a yawn, and Dream hid a smile in his pillow. "Don't like thinking about it. Everything is messed up and complicated when threads get involved."

Dream pursed his lips. He didn't like the resigned way George said that, how he sounded tired, but not in a sleepy way - more like he was weary. Dream wanted to find whoever made George sound like that and have a serious conversation with them.

"Is that why you always wear gloves when you're streaming?" Dream asked, curious.

George mumbled something inaudible in response.

"George?"

"Yeah, I guess - yeah. Something like that."

Dream bit down on his inner cheek. Moments like this were hard for him - part of him wanted to dig deeper, to get to know all the facets of George he hadn't uncovered even in the many years they'd known each other, to turn him inside out and inspect his every thought.

But the other part of him knew that George said things when he was tired that he didn't always want Dream to know, and Dream didn't want to take advantage. He wanted to wrap George in blankets, kiss his head, and send him to sleep.

He debated whether he should push further when George elaborated of his own accord. "I just... don't like the thought of showing my hands on camera, even if no one would be able to see my threads. Some things aren't for the internet."

Dream hummed. "I mean, I'm not one to talk. I don't show them anything."

"True." George huffed out a quiet chuckle. "You can't yell at me for not showing you my hands, you literally don't give me *any* clues at all."

"Looks shouldn't matter," Dream fired back his usual teasing response whenever they talked about this. "Not if you truly care about me."

"And you should want to give me what I want, if *you* care about *me*."

Dream's heart skidded to a halt. He swallowed around a dry lump in his throat, trying to hold back the answer building in his chest, weighing down his tongue. *I'll always give you anything you want. I'd give you the world.*

Instead, he swallowed the words and said, "I don't get it, though. Even if you did show me your hands, I wouldn't be able to see anything. Neither would your viewers, not unless you were already

threaded to them - and your parents don't watch your streams, right?"

"No, but my sister does sometimes."

"She's already seen your threads, though?"

George sighed. "I know. I just... I like the idea of keeping them to myself."

Dream hummed thoughtfully, wondering what George could be trying to hide. Dream hid his own hands because his romantic soulmate was out there somewhere and if they saw his picture, they'd be able to see the red thread on his finger, and they'd know they were his. Dream didn't want to find them that way. He didn't like the lack of control he had in that scenario, the thought that someone out there could look at a picture online and find him but he would still have no idea who they were.

Like George said, some things weren't for the internet.

"I guess that's why I never talk to you about thread stuff, either," George added after a few seconds of silence. "Everything gets complicated when we start talking about soulmates."

Dream hummed even while his brain screamed its disagreement. He itched to know everything about George, to know who he was threaded to, how he found out about them, who the important people in his life were and why Dream wasn't counted among them.

Not important enough for George to share this part of himself, anyway.

Dream closed his eyes, too tired to think his way out of his feelings. "I like knowing about it. I mean, it doesn't really matter who you're threaded to, as long as I know you'll always be in my life, but I like sharing stuff with you."

He received no answer but George's quiet breathing, and for a moment Dream wondered if George had finally drifted into sleep.

When he did eventually answer, his voice was drowsy and raw. "You're always like this, Dream."

"Like what?"

"You find it so easy to talk about stuff like this. I don't, it's... it just all feels like a lot, and I like it when I can just lay here and listen to you tell me whatever silly fact you've researched today until my brain quiets down enough to let me sleep."

Dream wanted to coo. Warmth spread slowly beneath his skin, flooding his chest until he felt floaty and calm, pleased with the knowledge that George liked hearing him talk. "Aww, Georgie. Shall I tell you about how the saliva in domestic cats is causing damage to the wild bird population?"

George sputtered out a startled laugh. "*How* did you end up there?"

Dream grinned. "Patches was staring at a bird out of the window earlier and I got curious."

"She's adorable. Tell me everything until I go to sleep."

"Alright, but don't blame me if your dreams are full of murderous furry creatures."

"Cats are cute, it wouldn't be a nightmare."

Dream chuckled, settling against his pillow with his phone by his head, and started talking. There,

in the darkness of his room past midnight in his silent apartment, he'd never felt more at home.

Nerves mixed into a jumbled, tense knot in Dream's stomach as soon as he posted the link in his, George's, and Sapnap's discord server.

He sat back in his desk chair, impatience running through him while he waited for one or the other of them to start typing - or better yet, join him in the voice channel. Only a week had passed since Sapnap confirmed he'd be able to move to Florida, but Dream was never one to wait around, so he'd started searching for appropriate houses as soon as he'd woken up the next morning.

This listing was pretty perfect, in his opinion. A rental, which was good while they figured out what to do about George, with three equal sized bedrooms and a spacious lounge with plenty of spots for Patches to make her own. Space for an office, too, and a decent kitchen for Dream to force them both to learn how to cook. It was available a month from now, which was maybe a little soon, but Dream was eager to start his life with his friends.

He opened the tab again, clicking through the pictures for the fourth time that morning. Doing this was dangerous. He could picture it already - coming down in the morning to find Sapnap lounging against the kitchen counter eating cereal right out of the box, crossing into the lounge where George would sprawl across the couch cushions, hair a mess and eyes sleepy.

Yearning left a dull ache imprinted between his ribs.

A discord notification sounded in his headphones and Dream pulled up the app, breaking into a smile when he saw Sapnap's typed reply.

Sapnap: *Heeeeell yeeeeeeah!*

Sapnap: *On vc with Karl rn but looks good!!!*

Sapnap: *I want the biggest room*

Dream snorted, fond. He typed out a response, then glanced at George's icon in the corner, greyed-out. He must still be sleeping.

Dream: *You're leaving me for Karl :((*

Sapnap: *He pays better than you*

Dream: *EXCUSE ME*

Dream: *:'(*

Dream: *:'(:'(:'(*

Sapnap: *Go play with George until I get back*

Dream: *He isn't here :'(*

Sapnap: *Oh that explains why you're so needy*

Dream huffed out a sigh, flicking a glance to George's greyed-out icon again. He hated to admit it, but Sapnap had a point - he was feeling antsy and restless because he hadn't had George's attention

on him yet that day, and he'd been up for a couple of hours, rising earlier than he'd managed in a few days because Patches screamed at him for breakfast.

As Dream drummed impatient fingers against his desk, George's discord icon lit up green. Dream perked up, going to message him privately, when the notification of someone joining the voice channel dinged in his headphones and the noisy sounds of George eating burst into his ears.

"Sup," George said around a mouthful of food.

Dream burst out laughing. "You are *disgusting*."

"That's the first thing you say to me all day? Wow, Dream."

"You're gross," Dream said easily. "Where have you been? I've been up *hours* and you didn't reply to any of my messages."

"Wow, needy much."

"George."

"I'm here, I'm here," George snickered, tone thoroughly amused. He swallowed noisily - toast, Dream would guess, it sounded like he was eating toast based on the audible crunch. He pictured George's desk, probably a jar of nutella sitting beside his messy keyboard. "I literally woke up, like, twenty minutes ago, calm down."

Dream sniffed. "Not acceptable."

"Chill out, Dream," George said through a laugh. Dream could hear faint clicks on the other end of the line as George moved his mouse, the familiar sound relaxing. Dream settled down, ready to spend the next few hours on call with his best friends, George a constant presence by his side virtually if not physically.

They hadn't spoken about soulmates again since that late night call last week. George never brought it up, and Dream decided it was safer to leave it in case George had accidentally revealed more than he'd have liked in his sleepy state of mind.

"What's this link you put in the group chat?" George asked, suspicious.

Nerves instantly climbed up Dream's throat again. He tried to keep his tone normal as he answered. "Just something I want you and Sapnap to look at."

"Is it a virus?"

"What? George, no, why would I—"

"It better not be a virus," George interrupted around another mouthful of food. "I just clicked on it."

Dream snorted. "Why would you click if you thought it looked suspicious?"

"It's you, you wouldn't actually break my computer." George hummed, thinking for a second. "Well, you *would*, but then you'd buy me a new one and I could do with a new setup."

"Hey, I would *not* just buy you a new computer," Dream complained, ignoring the quiet voice in his mind that told him he absolutely would.

George scoffed.

“I wouldn’t! Not if you broke it on your own, then it would be your responsibility to fix.”

“But you’d still do it for me,” George said slyly.

“I would not.”

“You literally gave me 5000 dollars, Dream. And you bought me new fortnite skins last week because I was complaining about not having the ones I wanted.”

Dream clicked his tongue, irked that he couldn’t deny any of that. “You deserved it.”

“Simp,” George teased, his voice pitching high. “You’d totally get me a new computer. Fancier than the one I just broke, too.”

“I would *not!*”

“You would if it meant I couldn’t get on discord for a few days.”

“No, wait, that’s not—” Dream grumbled, stomach tightening at the thought of George not being available for any length of time. “You’d still have your *phone*, idiot, I could still call you, and text you, and you’d pick up because I go through your do not disturb. You literally *couldn’t* ignore me.”

“What about streaming?” George countered, amusement apparent in his tone. Dream bit back a smile. “You wouldn’t be able to cope without seeing my face.”

“So I’d get you on video call.”

“Not fair when you wouldn’t have your camera on,” George sniffed, sounding smug. “You’d have to buy me a whole new setup so we could keep making videos together anyway.”

“Maybe we don’t need you anymore,” Dream teased. “We’re kicking you off the Dream Team.”

George burst out laughing. “You would *never*.”

“I hate to inform you, George, but your contract is up—”

“Oh my God, shut up.” George chuckled, and Dream would bet he was rolling his eyes in that exasperated, fond way he had when it came to Dream. “Idiot.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Dream grinned, leaning back in his seat. “Have you looked at the link yet?”

Silence fell, other than the faint click of George’s mouse. Dream listened to the even rhythm of his breathing, wishing he could see his face, could read his expression and get an idea of what he was thinking while he looked through the house listing Dream had found.

After a few minutes, George hummed. “It’s nice.”

“Yeah?” Dream sat up eagerly. “You like it?”

“I mean, it’s hard to get a complete idea from just pictures, but yeah.” George went quiet again, his voice low. “You and Sapnap would fit right in.”

A small frown furrowed Dream’s brow. George didn’t sound as excited as he’d expected, but maybe that was on Dream setting his expectations too high and his usual over-eagerness at getting the three of them in the same space as quickly as possible. He wasn’t the one having to leave his

city, his *country*, after all. Sapnap would be sad to leave Texas, he knew, even if Dream knew he really wanted to come and live with them. And George was leaving behind an entire nation. Every place he'd ever known, everything he called part of his home.

Dream should probably cut them both some slack.

"You too," Dream said, determined to make sure George knew he had a place here with them as soon as he wanted it. "I picked it out because the three bedrooms are about the same size, and that's hard to find around here."

"I call dibs on the biggest."

Dream laughed. "Sapnap already did that."

"Screw him, it's *mine*." George sounded lighter, his tone warm, and Dream relaxed.

"You can both fight over it, and while you're busy beating the shit out of each other I'm gonna sneak in and claim it as my own."

"You wouldn't," George gasped, betrayed.

"Watch me."

"No, no, not fair, you have to let me share."

Dream raised a brow. "Share?"

"Yeah!" George said with no hesitation. "You and I can both crash there and we'll leave Sapnap alone outside. He'll probably cry, it'll be great."

Dream bit back a laugh. His heart pattered pathetically beneath his ribs, ridiculously enamoured with the idea that George might want to share with him even though it was blatantly a joke. Winding up Sapnap was one of George's favourite pastimes, after all.

Still, Dream couldn't help but indulge in the fantasy. "Oh yeah? I don't know if I want to share with you though, George, you're probably a blanket thief or something."

"Hey!" George whined. "I'm not a thief, you don't know that about me at all."

"Don't I? You *behave* like a blanket thief."

"You don't know anything about how I behave in person," George pointed out. "I'm a complete delight."

Dream snorted.

"I am!"

"George, I love you, but you're a brat," Dream said, the words coming easily. He always told his friends he loved them, and he always had, and nothing about that was going to change because sometimes he got a strange ache in his chest when he thought about George existing in the same room as him.

The red thread on his ring finger lay dormant. Dream avoided looking at it.

"Simp," George said by way of reply, and Dream grinned. He didn't need George to say it back -

his actions portrayed his feelings far better than his words. “And I’m not a brat. *You’re* a brat.”

“Okay,” Dream said, giving in easily because he was soft for George. “But you like it? Sapnap said he’d join in a bit, if you’re both keen I’ll arrange a viewing.”

George went quiet again before he murmured, “Like, now?”

“Well, yeah? I mean - I know we have to wait for your visa, but I’m hoping that won’t take *too* long. Me and Nick can get your room ready for you in the meantime.”

“My room.” There was a smile in George’s voice. “There, in Florida, with you. *My* room.”

“Yeah.” Warmth settled deep in Dream’s chest, reaching right to his very core. “You, here. With me.”

George let out a shaky breath.

Dream swallowed in the ensuing silence, listening to George listen to him, and his heart fluttered beneath his ribs. Indescribable yearning pulled at him, aching right down to his bones, and this was dangerous - Dream couldn’t entertain thoughts like this. The red thread on his finger was tight even when it wasn’t moving, reminding him that he was anchored to someone else, someone he didn’t know but who must be *waiting* for him, out there somewhere in the world.

And Dream was too hung up on George to think about them.

His stomach clenched.

A quiet *ding* in his headphones was all the warning he got before Sapnap joined them, his voice melding into the silence with ease. “Yo! Cool house, Dream, where did you find it?”

Dream smiled at the obvious enthusiasm in Sapnap’s voice. “Online, you dumbass, where else?”

“Yeah, but where *is* it? Nice neighbourhood? Good takeout places nearby? You’re the one from Florida, dude, give us *details*.”

“Yeah,” George joined in, no hint of the usual tremor to his voice when they talked about moving in together. “It better have good takeout options, we’re not gonna survive if we attempt to cook.”

“I can cook for you,” Dream huffed, put out. “And my mom’s nearby, she’ll bring stuff over.”

“Yeah, your mom’s gonna come to see me,” Sapnap jeered.

Dream rolled his eyes.

“Or me,” George said lightly. “I’ll be her favourite.”

“You won’t, you little shit,” Sapnap complained.

“I will. I’ll be Dream’s favourite too.”

“No, he’s gonna love me more.”

“You *wish*—”

Dream chuckled, listening to the two of them bicker while he clicked back onto the tab with the house listing still up. He looked through the pictures, then scrolled down to the further details and

contact information for the realtor, his heart rate picking up.

He could see it so easily - the three of them building a life together.

"So I'm gonna go ahead and book a viewing," Dream announced, interrupting the ongoing argument. "Places go fast around here, if we like it we'll have to decide quickly."

"We?" George asked, mildly, at the same time Sapnap said:

"How quickly? It's available in like a month, right?"

"Yeah." Dream's mouth went dry, nerves simmering under his skin. "We wouldn't have to, like - move *immediately* though. I mean, I could, but you guys can just come whenever you're ready. I'll make it all nice for you."

George let out a quiet laugh, soft with affection.

"Dude," Sapnap added, oddly gentle. "I'll be there as soon as it's ready."

Dream bit his lip, heart so full he thought it might burst. "Yeah?"

"Yeah, man, I told you before I'd follow you anywhere."

Dream closed his eyes, squeezing them tight shut until sparks flitted across his vision.

"I mean, I have to wait for the government to decide to let me in," George said after a beat. "But I'll be there as soon as I'm allowed."

"Course you will," Sapnap said confidently. "You're gonna be here and we're all gonna get our threads and I'm gonna steal Patches from you both."

Dream huffed, annoyed, but George spoke up before he could respond.

"You think I'm gonna be your soulmate?"

"George, baby," Sapnap said with an audible grin. "*Obviously* you're my soulmate."

George scoffed. "Sounds like the worst thing in the world."

"Just you wait." Sapnap sounded gleeful. "Your yellow thread is gonna go right by Dream's on my left hand, I'm convinced of it."

"Left hand?" George asked, curious. "Which finger is Dream's on?"

Dream's heart stuttered in his chest. He answered for Sapnap. "Middle."

"Yeah," Sapnap agreed. "My dad's is my pinkie on that hand, too - my stepmom's is on my right hand, along with my friend from high school."

Dream smiled, glad to know his thread sat right there along with the rest of Sapnap's most important people. He wondered what George's hands looked like - where his threads sat, who they attached him to.

"I just have a feeling George is gonna be on our left hands, too," Sapnap continued. "Right, Dream?"

Dream froze.

He stared down at his own left hand, the two threads there standing out starkly - Sapnap's yellow next to the mystery red.

He tried to imagine a yellow thread joining them, one for George, and his heart squeezed unpleasantly tight.

Another red, then? Maybe he could have two romantic soulmates - though Dream couldn't imagine ever sharing his love for George with someone else. He loved Sapnap too, of course he did, and his family and wider circle of friends, but George was...

George was...

Different.

"Dream?" Sapnap prompted again, and Dream gave himself a shake, realising he'd been quiet for too long.

"Uh, yeah," he said, clearing his throat when his voice came out raspy. "Yeah, my left hand has room. My mom and sister are on my right hand."

"A perfect space for George," Sapnap teased, his voice warm and soppy.

George remained strangely quiet.

"Where are we gonna go for you, hey?" Sapnap asked, oblivious to the tension slowly creeping between them. "George? You'd better have space for us too."

Silence for another second before George said carefully, "There's space."

Dream ached to see his hands. He wished he could just touch George already, to put an end to this endless agonising and know exactly where they stood with each other.

He could hear the edge to George's tone, recognised how he was uncomfortable with the turn the conversation was taking, and decided to change the subject. Dream sat forward, clicking on the contact details under the house listing and clearing his throat again. "Right, I'm emailing the realtor right now. You can both come to the viewing with me."

Sapnap snorted. "Dude, how?"

"I'll call you, obviously."

"Video call?" George asked, curious, and Dream was relieved to hear him sounding more like his usual self.

"Don't go fishing," Dream answered with a smile while he typed. "The camera will be pointing at the rooms, not at me."

"Awww, Dream." George almost whined. "No fair."

"You'd rather look at me than your future house?"

"Yes," George said without missing a beat, and Dream's fingers fumbled against his keyboard. He stared as autocorrect fixed his typo, focusing on the blink of his cursor so he wouldn't get lost in overthinking.

Sapnap snorted. "Guys, I'm gonna go talk to Karl again if you keep making me the third wheel."

"Oooh, *Karl*." George sounded delighted, and Dream took in a careful breath, unfreezing when George's attention drifted away from him. "Someone for you to go be in love with too, huh?"

So much for not overthinking. Dream got stuck on those words. *In love with.*

A joke. It was a joke.

It didn't feel like a joke.

"Shut up, George," Sapnap huffed, surprisingly flustered. Dream dragged himself out of his own thoughts and focused on his friend instead, joining in with George.

"Oh? Something to tell us, Nick?"

"Fuck off." Sapnap grumbled. "I hate you both."

George laughed. "Karl and Sapnap, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S—"

"Shut *up!*" Sapnap whined, sharper than normal. "Karl doesn't like jokes like that, guys, come on."

Dream raised a brow. "*He* doesn't? Or you?"

Sanap groaned. "Do you want me to ask you both about the length of the discord call last night?"

George squeaked.

Dream bit his lip, caught. He'd taken to staying up most of the night with George lately, falling asleep on call to each other while their sleep schedules were mostly matched. They didn't fit either of the countries they lived in, but Dream didn't care if it meant he got to spend the maximum number of hours with George each day.

He'd forgotten that Sapnap was on the server too. He'd be able to see the timestamps, to see how long the call had gone on for before Dream woke up that morning and ended it - just a few hours ago.

Sapnap snorted into the sudden silence. "Right, thought so. Send the email, Dream."

Dream swallowed, focusing back on his typing. "You're the worst."

"The actual worst," George agreed faintly.

"You're both a bit pathetic," Sapnap said, not unkindly.

Dream rolled his eyes, huffing under his breath. He hit send on the email. "Right, realtor contacted. Dream Team house in progress."

Sapnap cheered, and after a second George joined in too. Dream leaned back in his chair, a small smile at his lips, content that he was doing the right thing.

After that, things moved very quickly.

Dream did indeed take George and Sapnap with him to the house viewing, leaving his phone open

on a video call while the slightly confused realtor showed him around the property. He made sure to keep the camera pointed away from his face at all times, and he wore gloves to be safe in case his hands came into shot at any point while walking them around the house.

“I want to see the bathroom,” George piped up, while Sapnap shouted enthusiastically in his headphones about the space for a giant TV and games console in the living room.

“Bathroom?” Dream raised a brow, walking back down the corridor they’d just come from while the realtor watched him from the kitchen. She had a polite smile on her face, but her confusion was obvious in her slightly-raised brows.

Dream ignored her, holding his phone out in front of him while he pushed open the door to the downstairs bathroom and stepped inside. It was one of the smaller rooms, just a toilet and a shower with a mirror over the sink. Dream took care not to stand in front of it while he showed the camera around.

“It’s small,” Sapnap complained.

“There’s two others upstairs.”

“And one has a bath,” George added. “I haven’t had a bath in *years*.”

“Disgusting,” Dream said with a grin.

George huffed.

Dream laughed, adjusting his headphones in his ears so he could listen out for the realtor. She’d tolerated his explanation when he told her about his two future roommates not being able to make it, so he had them on a call, and she was probably paid enough not to ask questions, but he still didn’t much like the scrutiny from a stranger.

So what if their living situation was a bit odd?

“Look, it isn’t even that small.” Dream reached up to one of the cupboards over the sink, still avoiding the mirror, and pulled open one of the doors. “I’m tall and I can reach up here just fine, I’m not squished or anything.”

“Oooh, Dream’s hand,” George said, high-pitched and teasing.

Dream laughed and wiggled his gloved fingers. “That’s your Dream content for the day.”

“Show me more,” George said, and Dream rolled his eyes, pulling up the sleeve of his green hoody to show off a sliver of his wrist. His skin was tanned from the sun, dotted with freckles.

George went *oooooooh* in his ear.

Sapnap groaned. “I don’t think I want to be here for this.”

“Sapnap’s jealous,” George joked, light-hearted, and Dream was thrilled with how easily his words were coming that day. Probably something to do with how late George had stayed up - Dream was pretty sure he hadn’t slept from the night before, and it was already the afternoon in England.

“Stand in front of the mirror,” George pressed, and Dream heaved a sardonic sigh.

“You really only care about my looks, don’t you?”

“No,” George said, “but it’s not fair that Sapnap’s gonna get to see you before I do.”

“I’ve already seen him,” Sapnap pointed out cheerfully.

Dream rolled his eyes. “You were eleven.”

“Yeah, but I still saw you before George!”

“We didn’t even *know* George then.”

“Not properly,” George said with an audible smile. “I was too busy being the cool older guy on the internet.”

“Oh my God, shut up,” Dream laughed. He walked backwards out of the bathroom, glancing down the hall to check the realtor was still safely out of earshot. He lowered his voice. “You’re gonna get me into trouble, I’m pretty sure the nice lady showing me round already thinks we’re in some sort of poly triad.”

Sapnap burst out laughing. “Is she wrong?”

“We could play it up for her,” George agreed, like the menace he was. “*Dreeeeam, are you gonna be a dear and have dinner ready for us when we get home?*”

Sapnap joined in instantly. “*Better be something good, we’ve had a long day at work.*”

“I hate you both,” Dream told them, his chest fizzing with something he couldn’t quite identify.

George snickered. “Dream would be the best house husband.”

“Yeah,” Sapnap agreed. “He cooks, he cleans, he has a cat—”

“Living the domestic dream.” George gasped, his chair creaking as he sat up straight and slammed his hand on his desk. “Domestic *Dream!*”

Dream rolled his eyes, breath catching in his throat despite himself. His heart needed to chill. “I’m divorcing you both.”

“You would never,” George said, tone warm, and Dream hated that he was right.

“Alright, come on, behave.” Dream turned to head back down the corridor, keeping the camera up so the two of them could see where he was going. He resumed his tour, the realtor answering any questions that came to mind, including the ones Sapnap and George asked through his headphones. She was nice enough, and very professional, and by the time Dream left the house to drive back to his apartment, his mind was made up.

Luckily, George and Sapnap agreed with him.

Dream signed the contract later that week.

The day Sapnap was due to arrive, Dream cleaned the house for hours.

Slightly ridiculous, considering that he’d only moved in two days ago and the place was still pretty much spotless, but Dream still spent the morning going around each room with a duster and the hoover, spraying fresh-smelling room spray everywhere he could and lighting one of the scented

candles he knew Sapnap liked in the living room.

He wanted this place to feel like a home.

The furniture was still sparse, just the couches and tables and beds that came with the rental and the few knick-knacks that Dream had accumulated over the years. He took care to place the few more personal items he owned around each room - a lamp in the shape of a cat, framed pictures of his family, his youtube plaques. At least this way it would feel like *their* space.

Sapnap was bringing all his worldly belongings in the car with him. He'd been driving for seventeen hours already, and had another three to go before he'd arrive, and Dream still couldn't quite wrap his head around the fact his best friend was coming to move in with him one month after they'd finalised the plans.

Sapnap would be *here*. In his space. Really soon.

With a low sigh, Dream flopped down onto the couch, closing his eyes. He knew George and Sapnap were on a call together, probably with Karl and Quackity and a few of the others, but Dream didn't want to join in just then. He felt highly-strung, nerves like live wires under his skin.

A quiet meow from his side had him turning.

Patches leaped lightly up onto the couch, staring at him with baleful yellow eyes. She hadn't much appreciated the move, and was still cautious as she slunk between rooms, her ears and tail pricked up high. She crawled onto his stomach, claws digging into his skin as she settled herself down and started kneading.

"Ouch, sweetheart." Dream wrinkled his nose, scratching behind her ear. "Are you settling in?"

Patches purred, tilting her head into his hand. Dream felt himself relaxing like a reflex - she always provided comfort and grounding for him, calming his racing mind and curbing his tendency to overthink. Dream ran his fingers through brown fur and felt some of the tension bleed out of him.

"You're gonna be good to Sapnap, right?" Dream smiled when Patches opened her mouth wide in a yawn, curling up in a ball on his stomach. "Maybe a nap is a good idea. I think he's going to be full of energy when he gets here."

Patches purred.

Dream's phone vibrated against his leg. Shifting carefully so as not to disturb Patches, he extracted it from his pocket and felt the beginnings of a smile tug at the corner of his mouth when he saw a notification from George.

George: *u doing ok?*

A private message. Dream clicked onto the group server, checking that the call was still live - George was there, in the voice channel with Sapnap and Karl and Quackity. Bad had been there earlier, when Dream was on the call before he took a break to speed-clean, but he must have dropped off for a bit.

For some reason, the thought that George was messaging to check in with him even while on a call with their other friends made Dream feel warm.

He typed out a reply, murmuring an apology when his movements made Patches grumble.

Dream: *yeah just tidying up*

George: *how much mess have you made in two days lmao*

Dream paused, knowing that concern lay behind George's teasing tone. He knew Dream better than anyone, and knew that Dream was likely spiralling into anxiety while he waited for one of his best friends to show up on his doorstep.

To *live with him*.

Dream considered his words carefully before typing out his reply.

Dream: *I just want it to be perfect*

George started typing, then stopped, and a few minutes passed. Dream laid his head back against the armrest and sighed, studying the white ceiling high above his head, wondering if Sapnap would have any opinions about the decor. He hoped Sapnap would like living with him.

What if he thought Dream was a nightmare roommate? Dream was particular about things, he had some mannerisms that other people might find strange. What if Sapnap found him really annoying in close proximity?

Dream's phone buzzed.

George: *Get out of your head*

Dream let out a short laugh. It was scary, sometimes, how in tune George was with him.

Dream: *How do I do that*

George: *Idk go find patches*

Dream smiled. He lifted his phone, switching over to his camera, and took a picture of Patches curled up fast asleep on his chest, claws digging lightly into his hoodie. His feet stretched out long on the couch, visible in the picture, but George had seen pictures like this before. The only parts of Dream he hadn't seen were his face and his hands.

He sent the picture with a caption: *She's way ahead of you*

George: *awwwwwwwwwww*

George: *sapnap's going to love you and her*

George: *get some sleep while you wait for him he's hours away still*

Dream let out a soft sigh, contemplating the messages. George was right - there were at least two hours before Sapnap would be even close to arriving, and Dream had already cleaned the house twice over. Food from his mom was in the fridge, takeout menus ready on the kitchen counter, giant TV set up with all the games consoles Sapnap had requested - there wasn't much left to do to make him feel welcome.

A nap might not hurt.

Dream slid down the couch, careful not to disrupt Patches, and typed a reply.

Dream: yeah ur right

Dream: thanks

George: :]

Dream smiled at the familiar smiley face - George's go-to response whenever Dream got too emotional with his words. It comforted him, knowing that George would always be the same with him no matter what else was changing around them.

Setting an alarm for two hours' time, Dream placed his phone down on the coffee table and laid a hand on Patches' brown fur. He closed his eyes, tiredness weighing him down surprisingly quickly, and drifted into sleep.

When his alarm woke him two hours later, Dream felt a lot better.

Nerves still sizzled under his skin, but they were closer to anticipation than the nauseating anxiety he'd been drowning in earlier. He jumped in the shower to wake himself up a bit, then fed Patches her dinner and wandered around straightening random objects as the time ticked closer and closer to Sapnap's imminent arrival.

When there were just fifteen minutes to go, Dream joined the voice call again.

Only Sapnap and George were still there by the time he got his headphones connected to his phone and tapped on the voice channel. They both greeted him with cheers the second he joined, and Dream grinned, his chest brimming with affection for the two most important people in his life.

“Finally, dude!” Sapnap sounded very energetic for someone who had been on the road for approximately twenty hours. “I’m so close, Orlando traffic is shit.”

Dream snorted. “Don’t be rude about your new home.”

“Did you nap?” George asked, his tone warm and caring, and Dream turned to press his face into the back of his hand, suppressing a giddy smile.

“Yeah, a bit. I feel much better.”

“That’s good.” George hummed, taking a sip of something - an energy drink, Dream would guess, because it was getting late in England and George probably wanted to stay awake. “Remember that you are *not* allowed to hang up on me when Sapnap finally gets there, right?”

“Sure thing, George baby.” Sapnap laughed, bright and overly boisterous. Dream thought of having to deal with an over excited Sapnap hyped up on sweets and no sleep in just a few minutes and rolled his eyes.

The yellow thread on his left hand gave a sudden, sharp tug.

Dream sucked in a sharp breath, almost dropping his phone at the intensity. As he gathered himself, the thread tugged again, straining against his middle finger like he was being physically pulled forward.

Through his headphones, he heard Sapnap gasp.

“Nick,” Dream breathed. “Is it—”

“Yeah.” Sapnap sounded choked up. “I - guess I must be close?”

“What?” George demanded. “What’s happening?”

Dream was already moving - striding towards his front door as if he was in a dream, the world around him not quite feeling real. He pulled open the door and stepped out onto the driveway, shielding his eyes from the bright sun, and stood on the warm stone in just his socks.

The street was quiet, like always, suburban and homely. Dream looked both ways down the road, his stomach flipping when the thread on his finger tugged again.

“The GPS says, like, five minutes.” Sapnap’s voice sounded strained. “Fucking *traffic*—”

“I’m waiting outside,” Dream said, breathless.

George huffed. “*What?* What’s happening?”

“The thread,” Dream explained, staring down at his left hand when the thread pulled and didn’t let up, tugging against his skin. “It’s - Sapnap must be close.”

“Three minutes,” Sapnap agreed shakily.

“Oh my God.” George slammed a hand on his desk, the bang echoing hollow in Dream’s ears. “It’s happening, guys, it’s *happening*!”

Dream focused on his breathing - in, out, in, out - and tried not to let his emotions overwhelm him. He could feel them bubbling up his throat, excitement and terror and nerves and joy.

A car rounded the corner, engine rumbling. Dream recognised it.

Sapnap.

Phone dropping from slack fingers, Dream pulled his headphones out and strode down the driveway towards the road, heart in his mouth. He watched the car pull to a screeching halt, music blasting until it cut off abruptly and the driver door flew open to reveal a very tired-looking Sapnap clambering onto the sidewalk, hair rumpled and clothes creased.

Dream rocked to a halt, taking him in.

Sapnap looked older, but recognisable from the eleven-year-old kid Dream had first met close to a decade ago, squished together at Disneyland on a trip organised by their parents because both sets were curious about who their sons were spending so much time talking to on the internet. They’d hugged then and found a yellow thread wrapping itself around their fingers - a thread which was currently straining so hard against Dream’s skin that it ached.

Sapnap stared up at him from the thread’s other end, eyes wide.

He was shorter than he looked on stream, his usual cap pulled low over his face to protect from the blinding Floridian sun. Dream’s heart constricted at the sight of him there, *right there* in front of him, within touching distance.

His best friend.

Sapnap broke into a barely-constrained grin, so wide that Dream wondered how it didn’t split his

face in two. “*Finally.*”

Dream choked out a laugh and opened his arms.

Sapnap rushed up the driveway and fell into Dream’s hold, and Dream laughed harder, clutching him so tight he thought he might crush him. Sapnap didn’t seem to care, clinging on just as hard and slapping Dream’s back repeatedly. The yellow thread burned bright between them, finally relaxing with their touch.

“Clay,” Sapnap breathed, eyes closed.

Dream smiled. “Hi, Nick.”

Sapnap stepped back after a long few seconds, blinking up at Dream and squinting. He tilted his head, studying his face, and a wave of self-conscious nerves swept over Dream. He took a step back, rubbing the back of his neck. “What?”

“Dude,” Sapnap said, raising a brow. “You got *tall*.”

Dream huffed. “I was thirteen the last time you saw me.”

“Yeah, but you’re like, a *giant*.”

“I just think you haven’t grown at all. In fact, I think you were *taller* when you were a kid.”

“Oh my God, shut up.” Sapnap rolled his eyes, balling up a fist and punching Dream in the shoulder. He had to reach up to do it, Dream noted with delight, eyes scrunching up with the strength of his grin.

“You’re the one that brought it up.”

“I regret everything,” Sapnap announced, then turned and stared despondently at his car. “Ugh, I have so much fucking stuff. I don’t want to *move*, I’m so tired.”

“We can get it later,” Dream offered. “Or you can go sit and I’ll bring it in. There’s food in the fridge, or we can order takeout, whatever you want really, I just thought—”

“Dream, it’s chill.” Sapnap’s voice turned soft, and when Dream turned back to him he was smiling, relaxed and happy. “We’ll sort it later. Right now I just want to sit somewhere that isn’t inside a vehicle.”

Dream chuckled. “We have couches inside.”

“Sounds *perfect*.” Sapnap patted his pockets, wrinkling his nose. “Ugh, wait, left my phone on the dash. Hold on.”

Dream nodded, watching as he went back to the car, only to then realise he also wasn’t holding his own phone anymore. He hunted around, searching the pockets of his jeans, then his hoody, then the ground around him when he couldn’t find it.

“What’re you doing?” Sapnap asked around a yawn.

Dream furrowed his brow. “Can’t find my phone - think I dropped it when you showed up.”

“Me too. Weren’t you wearing your headphones on the call?”

“Yeah, I—” Dream spotted the glint of his headphones on the drive and let out a sigh of relief, crouching to pick them up.

Then he realised, and stared up at Sapnap just at the same second Sapnap turned to him with a horrified expression.

“Oh shit,” Dream said.

Sapnap grimaced. “*George*.”

Predictably, by the time they’d got Sapnap settled on the couch with his most urgent belongings in from the car and finally rejoined the call, George was *furious*.

“How *could* you?! You both just - *disappeared*, and right when you said Sapnap was *literally there*—!”

“We’re sorry,” Dream said weakly, kicking his feet up on the footstool while Sapnap searched through takeout menus next to him.

“Sorry doesn’t cut it!” George yelled. “You both *promised* me you’d let me be there when you met!”

“Dude, it was like, five minutes,” Sapnap reasoned towards Dream’s phone, which was now on speaker.

George huffed. “It’s so *weird* hearing you both through Dream’s account.”

“My phone is in dire need of charging,” Sapnap complained. “Cut me some slack.”

“*No, I will not!* You *hung up on me!*”

Dream grimaced, sharing a quick look with Sapnap, who rolled his eyes up to the ceiling. They were used to George’s dramatics, but Dream couldn’t help the smidgen of guilt that stirred in his gut.

“We’ll make it up to you,” Dream promised.

“You’d better,” George huffed. “You’d better not leave the call tonight until I’m already asleep, Dream.”

“I won’t,” Dream promised easily - sleeping next to George (virtually) was his favourite way to spend the night anyway. He could feel Sapnap’s curious gaze on him and avoided turning to face him, instead focusing on his phone. “And we’ll both jump on your next stream too, how about that?”

“It’s the *least* you could do.” George was pouting - Dream could hear it. He suppressed a fond grin.

“Do you guys do that a lot, then?” Sapnap asked. Dream turned to him, lifting a brow, to find Sapnap giving him a curious look, head tilted to the side, studying him short-distance.

Dream swallowed, unused to being watched.

“Do what?” George asked.

“Stay on call all night. Like, while you’re asleep?”

Dream’s face warmed. He ducked behind his blond curls, hoping Sapnap wouldn’t notice how easily he flushed, or how expressive his face was when he had something on his mind. Dream had always been easy to read, and without the protection of a computer screen he had no defence from Sapnap.

George sputtered on the other end of the line.

“I don’t *care*,” Sapnap added after a few seconds of silence. “I just - like, I see the length of the calls sometimes, and I wondered what the hell you had to talk about for so long. Or are you literally just sleeping, like - while listening to each other?”

“Don’t make it sound *creepy*,” Dream mumbled.

“Sometimes,” George said carefully at the same time.

Sapnap hummed. He dropped the subject, letting George continue to ramble about ideas for his next stream, but his eyes never left Dream’s face. Dream shifted, reaching up with his left hand to brush his hair back, fidgeting under the scrutiny.

Sapnap’s gaze drifted to his hand instead, and then he reached out and touched the centre of Dream’s palm.

Dream jolted.

He looked down, pleased at the sight of the visible yellow thread between them, linking their left middle fingers together with one smooth string. Seeing both ends of it right there in front of him, in *person*, had a shock tingling down his spine.

Sapnap grinned, tugging on their yellow thread lightly, but then his gaze drifted to the red thread on Dream’s ring finger before his eyes darted back up to Dream’s face.

Dream looked back, praying his expression didn’t give anything away.

Sapnap knew about Dream’s red thread already, of course. He’d seen it back when they first met, but they were just kids then and were so excited to finally be in each other’s presence that they hadn’t paid too much attention to their other threads. Over the years, Sapnap had never brought it up, and neither had Dream.

He wondered if Sapnap had simply forgotten about it.

“One sec, guys,” George said from Dream’s phone speaker. “My mum’s calling.”

“Sure,” Dream said, proud when his voice came out sounding calm.

When George dropped out of the voice channel, Sapnap turned on him. “Dude, I totally forgot about this.”

“Forgot about what?” Dream asked uselessly, hoping to buy some time.

Sapnap raised a brow and tapped Dream’s ring finger. “Your red thread! I mean, like, I *knew*, I remember seeing it when we were kids, but - I don’t think I fully grasped what it meant back then. You have a *romantic soulmate*? ”

Dream swallowed, his throat tight. Anxiety dug its claws into his skin, his stomach churning in the

sickening way he always felt when he remembered there was someone out there in the world meant for him, but he had no idea who they were.

“And you never told us?” Sapnap continued, voice hurt. “I mean - who *is* she? Why have you literally never mentioned her in all these years we’ve been friends?”

Awkwardness and embarrassment simmered under Dream’s skin, coming out sharper than he intended. “Who said they’re a she?”

Sapnap blinked, startled. “What?”

Dream let out a breath, squeezing his eyes closed. He rubbed at his forehead, trying to quieten the clamour of thoughts racing through his mind, the beginnings of a headache building behind his temples. None of this was Sapnap’s fault - there was a reason Dream had never let him or George into this messy part of his life.

George. His chest ached.

“Shit, Clay, I’m sorry.” Sapnap’s tone softened, and he curled his fingers into Dream’s sleeve, the touch grounding. “I didn’t - I just - you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.”

Dream’s eyes flew open and he turned his head, guilt climbing up his throat. “No, that’s not what I —” He cut himself off with a sigh. “It’s not, like, a secret. Or I guess it is. I just - I don’t know who they are.”

“What?”

“The person on the other end of this thread. I don’t know who they are.”

Sapnap stared at him. “You... don’t know?”

Dream shook his head.

“How can you not know?”

“It happened years ago, in a crowded room,” Dream explained, tipping his head back against the couch. The words came easily after that as he explained to Sapnap what happened when he was on holiday with his family aged seven, how someone must have brushed past him in the crowd but he’d never been able to find them. All he had left was the thread on his finger, with no clue where it led.

Sapnap sat in quiet disbelief when he was done. Eventually, he cleared his throat, reaching up to adjust his cap in an awkward gesture that Dream recognised from his streams. Seeing it in person was *weird*.

“Aren’t there, like,” Sapnap started slowly, “Forums for that? You can post about where you met someone, they might be able to find you?”

“Tried that,” Dream said wryly. “My mom tried just about everything when I was growing up. She posted on all the forums and sites, contacted the local police and council to put out a warning, but we were in New York when it happened and there’s no knowing where the person on the other end of my thread is from. My mom never stopped trying though. She’s still got the tickets from the exhibit we went to that day to try and prove it, should I ever find them again one day.”

Sapnap clicked his tongue. “You will. You have to, I mean, they’re your *person*.”

“Yeah.” Dream shook his head, closing his eyes. “Maybe.”

“Don’t you *want* to find them?”

The question stung. Dream swallowed, the usual mix of guilt and anxiety churning through him whenever he thought about his red thread. He should be *excited*, he knew he was lucky to have confirmation that somewhere out there in the world a person meant for him was walking around, just going about their daily life. Some people never got that. Dream should be thrilled, should be excited, just waiting for the day their paths would cross again.

If they ever did.

He glanced back towards his phone, where George was sitting on the other end of the line. The voice call was still active, but George hadn’t reappeared yet. Good. Dream didn’t want him finding out like this.

George complicated everything.

“I don’t know,” Dream answered finally, the words heavy on his tongue. “I don’t really know anything. I can’t ever show my hands on stream, if they saw me and they knew I was *Dream*—”

“Worried they’re an anti?” Sapnap asked, trying to keep the tone light.

Dream grimaced. “I just don’t want them to find me when I might not be aware of it. I want to - if they *are* meant to find me again, I want to know at the same time they do.”

“Makes sense,” Sapnap said after a moment. “You *are* a control freak.”

Dream sent him a sideways glare.

Sapnap grinned at him, though the expression didn’t quite meet his eyes. He straightened. “One thing I can tell you is they’re not one of my current soulmates, whoever they are. The red thread ends just below your finger for me, like it’s been cut.”

Dream nodded, glancing down at his own hands, then Sapnap’s. He could see the other threads on Sapnap’s fingers, but the only one that continued past his finger was the one connecting him to Dream. The other yellow threads on Sapnap’s hands came to an abrupt end just inches past his fingers, dangling in the air, because Dream wasn’t soulmates with the other people Sapnap was connected to.

He knew who they were, though: Sapnap’s dad and stepmom, and his best friend from high school. Not his mom, which was a source of contention from Sapnap’s past and a subject Dream had learned to delicately avoid.

“You’ll find them again,” Sapnap said bracingly, patting Dream’s arm. “The universe doesn’t mess up stuff like this.”

Dream let out a hollow laugh. His gaze drifted unbidden back to his phone again.

Sapnap followed the movement and cleared his throat. “George. Dream, does he—?”

Before Sapnap could finish the question, the notification that someone joined the call echoed through the speakers on Dream’s phone and George’s voice piped up. “Sorry, God, my mum has the worst timing.”

Dream laughed, glad of the distraction. “Don’t be rude about your mom like that.”

“Mom.” George mocked his accent, smile audible.

“Shut up.” Dream actively avoided looking in Sapnap’s direction, where he could feel his gaze boring into his cheek, and he knew there would probably be more questions about this later. He wasn’t sure if he felt relieved or scared that he now had someone to talk to about his mixed up feelings around his red thread. “Let’s watch something together.”

“Together?” George asked, amused. “How?”

“We’ll put a movie on here, and you put the same one on there, and we’ll start it at the same time.”

“Nice idea,” Sapnap agreed, though he gave Dream a knowing look as he stood up to hunt down the remote. “Okay, *wow* - George, you should *see* the size of the TV we have here. I love having a rich sugar daddy.”

Dream snorted.

“No fair, I just have my lame computer screen,” George complained, and Dream let out a fond sigh, itching for George to be here with them, curled up on the sofa between them.

The image that presented itself in his mind had his heart stuttering in its tracks.

“Then hurry up and *get here!*” Sapnap yelled, crouching by the TV while he hunted for the right buttons to turn it on. “What shall we watch?”

“I get to pick,” George said decisively. “Seeing as you guys *hung up on me.*”

Dream heaved a heavy sigh. He had a feeling George wouldn’t be letting either of them forget that for a while, and would probably call it in along with all the other remembered slights and fights they’d had over the years that George seemed to keep a running total of in his head.

It was nice, though, Dream had to admit - crashing on the couch with Sapnap while George stayed on the call, all of them watching the same movie together. They used to do this over voice chat when they were all in separate rooms, separated by miles but sharing commentary on the story playing out in front of them. The only difference this time was the warmth Dream could feel radiating from Sapnap on his left side, the crunch when he munched on the takeout they ordered, and the yawns he started emitting as afternoon lengthened into evening.

George remained almost ferociously involved. He made sure to loudly commentate on every little thing happening in the movie, whether he thought the plot points were stupid or the character’s motivations nonsensical. Dream caught himself listening to the timbre of George’s voice more than what he was saying, paying less and less attention to the details of the plot as the evening drifted on.

That hard, jagged tremor was back in George’s voice. Dream could hear it.

If Sapnap noticed it too, he didn’t say anything. In fact, he grew quieter and quieter as the hours passed, burrowing into the couch cushions until finally Dream glanced over near the end of the movie to find him passed out, eyes closed, mouth half-open while he snored.

Dream smiled, fond. “Oh. Someone fell asleep on us.”

“Hm?” George was eating again, chewing noisily over the call.

“Sapnap’s sleeping.”

“Spoilsport,” George said easily. “There’s only ten minutes left.”

“He was driving for a really long time.”

“I know - I was on call with him for most of it.”

Dream smiled, tucking his legs into his chest and picking his phone up, plugging his headphones back in so that he wouldn’t wake Sapnap.

Also, he missed the sound of George’s voice directly in his ears, though he wasn’t sure he should admit to that.

“Have you slept at all, George?” Dream asked once he was situated, barely paying attention to the end of the movie.

George hummed. “Not since, like, we fell asleep together last night. Or was that yesterday morning? I lost track.”

Dream clicked his tongue. “It was too many hours ago. You should sleep again.”

“No!” George whined instantly. “No, no, you’re not allowed to leave me alone yet, you *promised*.”

Dream paused. George wasn’t often vocal about his neediness - he liked Dream’s attention, yes, but he usually at least attempted to be subtle about it, calling Dream’s name repeatedly over stream or spamming his messages with random insults until Dream eventually responded.

George when he was suffering from lack of sleep was a dangerous beast.

“I’m not gonna leave you,” Dream reassured, his voice low so as not to disturb Sapnap.

“Good.” George’s tone softened to match his. “It feels really weird, knowing you’re there together without me.”

“You *are* here.”

“But you know it’s not the same, Dream,” George pointed out, and Dream didn’t like the despondent edge to his voice. A flurry of irritation rippled through him, annoyed that he couldn’t control when the American government would allow George into the country, or when the British government would permit free travel between their countries again.

He could make sure George knew how much Dream wanted him here, though.

“It’s not the same, but it will be,” Dream answered, determined. “I’m not gonna rest until that visa is in your hands. It feels great having Nick here, but it’s not *right* when you’re not with us.”

The call went quiet for a few seconds. When George finally replied, his voice was small. “Isn’t it?”

“Not at all, George,” Dream insisted. “You’re one of our puzzle pieces. Nothing will be right until you’re here with us.”

A shaky inhale over the phone betrayed how George was really feeling. Dream closed his eyes. He couldn’t blame George, because whenever he imagined himself in the reverse situation, if Sapnap was in the UK with George and Dream was trapped an ocean away, an ugly hot anger burned through his gut until he thought he might explode.

George was dealing with that reality right now.

"I'm gonna leave you on call twenty-four-seven," Dream announced, casting a quick glance at Sapnap to make sure he was still sleeping. "You'll come everywhere with me - and Sapnap too, of course - until you're finally here in person. And you *will be*, George, just as soon as the visa goes through."

George made a grumbly noise into his mic. "That's gonna take *forever*. Have you seen the waiting times with the pandemic? And that's only once I've finally gathered all the evidence—"

"It's gonna happen," Dream said firmly. "I'll help you. We'll get it done together."

"Sapnap was right - you are the best sugar daddy."

Dream rolled his eyes. "Fuck off."

George giggled, the sound lighter than he'd been all evening. Something eased in Dream's chest to hear him laugh, more like his normal self even if he was sleep-deprived.

A quiet meow from the corner of the room made Dream turn. Patches slunk into the room, sticking to the far wall and eyeing the stranger sitting on her couch with great suspicion. Dream broke out into a grin, glad she'd finally come out from her hiding place - she hadn't dared show her face around Sapnap yet, always wary around strangers.

"Hey, baby," Dream murmured, getting up from the couch to crouch by her side.

In his headphones, George made a choked sound. "*What?*"

"C'mere, Patches," Dream soothed, holding out a hand while she approached. "Good baby, it's just Sapnap - you haven't met him yet, have you?"

"Oh." George cleared his throat, sounding more tense than Dream was used to. "Patches is there?"

"Yeah, she just woke up." Dream smiled when she finally nudged her head against his palm, allowing him to scratch behind her ear. "She's been hiding from Sapnap, poor thing."

"Oh."

Dream hummed, stroking her fur, before glancing over to Sapnap's sleeping form still laid out prone on the couch. "I think we're gonna have to do the introductions tomorrow. He's passed out."

"He's gonna be pissed." George sounded gleeful, if still a bit odd. "I wish I could meet her before he does."

Dream tilted his head, a thought coming to him. Without a word, he put a finger over his front camera and switched to a video call, holding up his phone.

George made a noise of surprise.

"Here," Dream said softly, flipping over to the other camera, and then directed it at Patches. She blinked in the dull light, staring straight at the camera with her ears pricked up.

George cooed. After a second, his own camera turned on and George's face swam into view on Dream's screen, tired-looking but just as beautiful as ever.

That thought stopped Dream in his tracks.

George was beautiful - this wasn't new knowledge. Objectively, Dream could appreciate that his friend was attractive, and he was far from the only one going by the number of fans who left comments all over George's instagram and tik tok. But something felt different about admitting that to himself here, in the quiet darkness with Sapnap asleep a few feet away.

"She's so cute," George was saying, murmuring into Dream's ear. "Look at her, such a *baby*, why is she so fluffy?"

"She is fluffy," Dream acknowledged, ruffling up the fur on her head just to show her off, though he made sure to keep the sleeves of his hoody pulled right down so that George couldn't see his threads. She batted a paw at him in complaint and George laughed.

"She's fighting you."

"She'd win."

"You'd let her win, you're a giant pushover," George said cheekily.

Dream made a noise of complaint low in his throat. Patches tolerated his petting for another few seconds before she darted away towards the kitchen, no doubt seeking out her food bowl, and Dream pushed himself up to his feet, leaving his camera on while he turned to survey the mess of takeout leftovers strewn across the coffee table.

George giggled in his ear. "You ate so much *food*."

"Sapnap was hungry," Dream defended himself. He pointed his phone at the couch, where Sapnap was sprawled out fast asleep, and George's face lit up in delight.

"Hold it there, hold it *right there*, I'm getting screenshots."

Dream snorted, but obeyed. "He's gonna yell at me for this."

"Serves him right," George said easily, eyes flicking between his monitor and his keyboard. Dream watched his gloved hands dart across the keys, the room completely dark around him apart from where George was sitting at his desk, lit only by his monitor.

Dream's heart ached.

"He can't be mad at me when he literally hung up on me earlier," George continued. "I can't *believe* you guys did that to me, it's so unfair."

"We didn't mean to," Dream promised, glancing at the yellow string winding across the lounge connecting him to Sapnap. "It was just - kinda a lot, seeing him in person again after all this time."

"I know, but it's still not fair. He's seen your *face*."

Dream hummed, surprised by the annoyance in George's tone. "Does it really bother you that much?"

"You not showing me your face?"

"Yeah."

George let out a quiet sigh, his gaze focusing on the camera. Dream stared at his phone screen, taking in the image of George displayed back at him, basking in being able to read his expressions and watch the emotions flit across his face.

"I would never push you to do it," George said after a few seconds, more serious than most of their conversations. Dream appreciated that he was being honest - George was wonderfully, refreshingly blunt. "But I'm not gonna lie, it does bother me that Sapnap gets to see you first."

"He already saw me when we were kids," Dream pointed out. "Before it became this - thing."

"I know, but now he's seen you as you are now. And I haven't seen *anything*."

Dream licked his lips, uncertainty holding him in place. He didn't know when his face had become such a point of contention, not just with George but with the wider internet too - he'd never intended for it to spiral this far out of hand. Not showing his face on the internet was something he hadn't even really decided - he just didn't ever think it was necessary.

Then too many people became invested in his appearance, and Dream's stubbornness kicked in until he decided not to show *anyone*.

Not even George.

Maybe there was another reason for that, though. George already had so much of him, Dream felt like giving over this final piece of himself would be admitting defeat.

The red thread on his finger itched, remaining stubbornly still.

"You're gonna see me when you get here," Dream said finally, and George snorted.

"Yeah, I'm ditching my family and friends and my entire *life* over here to come live with some guy on the internet whose face I've never even seen."

"Well, when you put it like *that*," Dream whined. "That sounds awful, George, fucking hell, I'm not - it's not like *that*."

"I know, idiot." George laughed. "I meant what I said. I'd never push you to show me."

Dream bit down on his inner cheek. He didn't deserve George.

"But you can't blame me for being curious."

A lick of heat curled through Dream's chest. "Curious?"

"Mhm." George had a half-smile tugging at one corner of his mouth, eyes on the camera like he was staring into Dream's soul, even though all he could see was Sapnap's shadowy form passed out on the couch. "You're this really important person that I've known for years, and yet I have no idea what you look like."

"You have some idea," Dream pointed out, trying to ignore the way his chest fizzed. *Really important person.* He hoped he was really important to George.

George clicked his tongue. "Blond, green eyes - that's like, half the white guys in America, Dream."

Dream snickered. "You know my height, too."

"Yeah, yeah, you're a giant, I get it."

"Sapnap's really short," Dream commented, glancing back over to the couch. "Don't tell him I said this, but I bet you have an inch or two on him."

George cheered. "How would you know that, though? You haven't seen me in person."

"Just a feeling. You're like, slender, but more willowy. Sapnap's stocky. I think you'd be taller than him."

"Willowy?" George's tone turned wicked. "That's a weird compliment, Dream."

"Shut up, that's not what I meant." Dream struggled to keep his tone even, the whisper of a thought in his mind betraying him - he *did* mean it, he would shower George in compliments if he could. He did, in fact, often telling George how he had pretty privilege, how he was the light in the room, hiding genuine feelings behind jokes and teasing.

Dream just wasn't sure when the genuine feelings had become so all-encompassing.

"Do I let Sapnap sleep on the couch, or do I poke the bear and make him go up to bed?" Dream asked in a very obvious attempt to change the subject.

George didn't comment on the obvious ploy, and Dream had never loved him more than in that exact moment. He grinned, a wicked tint to his dark eyes as he looked into the camera. "Wake him up, he'll yell at you."

"You're mean," Dream complained.

"*He's* mean, going to sleep on the couch when you spent all day tidying up for him and setting up his new bedroom."

Dream smiled. George knew him so well, could read his mind better than Dream could sometimes, like when he'd told Dream to nap earlier because somehow George just knew that Dream was obsessing over the state of the house even without Dream having to tell him. Dream crossed over to the couch, deciding that he wasn't going to let Sapnap ruin his back on his first night here, and gave his shoulder a light shove, pointing his camera away so that George couldn't see his hand.

Sapnap stirred, muttering under his breath.

"C'mon, Nick," Dream murmured, giving him another push. "Time for bed."

Sapnap groaned, squinting up at him with bleary eyes. He took in the situation with a passive tilt to his head, from the credits rolling on the TV screen to Dream standing over him with his phone open on the video call with George.

Sapnap yelped. "You didn't let him see me sleeping, did you?"

"Too late!" George crowed through his headphones.

Dream sent Sapnap a sheepish grin, glad he couldn't hear George laughing through the headphones. "'Uh, he might have taken some screenshots.'"

"Hell yeah I did," George agreed.

Sapnap let out a sleepy shriek, burrowing his way further into the couch cushions until Dream finally had enough and heaved him to his feet. They set about clearing away the remains of their takeout, putting leftovers in the fridge and throwing away the empty boxes, and then Dream finally cajoled Sapnap up the stairs and into his bedroom, saying goodnight in the doorway.

"That's his room?" George asked curiously, still on video call.

Dream nodded through a yawn, forgetting George couldn't see him. "Mm, he wanted the one by the office. You and me are at the other end of the hall."

"Show me," George demanded, voice gentle in Dream's headphones.

Dream walked him down the corridor easily enough, showing him the closed door to what would be George's room - currently devoid of anything but a bare bedframe - and then turned to his own bedroom door opposite George's. He hadn't video called George from here yet, he'd only moved in himself two days ago.

"It's still mostly boxes," Dream warned through another yawn as he nudged open the door, careful to keep his hands out of shot. "I haven't really unpacked yet."

George merely gave a low hum in response, sounding tired. Dream glanced down at his phone screen and smiled at the sleepy way George was leaning his chin on his fist, eyes half-closed as he studied the computer screen in front of him.

"Aw, Georgie," Dream said, letting his tone grow impossibly fond. "Go to bed."

"Don't wanna," George argued, his words slurring together. "Wanna stay with you."

Dream resisted the urge to coo. His chest fizzed with warmth, slow affection spreading through his veins like liquid gold as he carried George into his room and set him down on his desk, facing the ceiling. "Well, I'm getting into bed. Come with me."

"Ooooh, getting into bed with Dream," George teased, voice sleep-thick.

"Yeah, yeah, idiot. Go put on your pyjamas."

He could hear a faint rustling on the other end of the line that told him George was obeying his command. Dream smiled, finding his own pyjamas next to where Patches was curled up by his pillow and changing swiftly, trying not to think too much about George doing the same just out of shot on the other end of the line.

Only when he was safely settled among his blankets with Patches curled up by his side did Dream dare to look at his phone screen again.

The image he was met with took his breath away.

George was lying on his side, face squished against his pillow as he stared at his propped-up phone beside him. He was wearing some sort of baggy jumper to bed, hanging low over his collarbones, sleeves too long for him giving him sweater paws. Dream stared at the very tips of his fingers he could just see splayed out on the pillow next to dark hair, wondering what threads George would have decorating his fingers if he pulled his sleeve a little lower. Dream would be able to see them once they'd touched in person and confirmed they were soulmates.

If they were soulmates.

"Your room looks nice," George mumbled sleepily.

"Yeah?" Dream glanced around the darkness of his new bedroom, not yet used to the surroundings. "I've hardly unpacked."

"Yeah, but your desk and computer setup is there, and your wardrobe is already covered in a pile of clothes. It looks like you."

Dream let out a quiet laugh, unsure if he should be offended at George calling him messy or touched that George apparently knew how he kept his surroundings so well. “Would be nicer if you were here with me.”

“You just wanna cuddle,” George accused, though his smile gave him away.

“What if I do?” Dream couldn’t resist pushing, not when he was tired and fond from a day with Sapnap, with George so close and so far all at once.

George studied him through the camera, even though Dream knew he couldn’t see his face - his front camera was currently pointed to a very boring patch of floor.

“Can’t trust what you say at night,” George said eventually, his dark gaze fixed on Dream. Dream swallowed. “You never mean it in the morning.”

“I mean this,” Dream insisted.

George rolled onto his back. “Go cuddle Sapnap. He’s the one that’s there.”

“But I want to cuddle you.”

“*Dream.*” George sighed, his name sounding so perfect on George’s lips that Dream thought he might die a little.

Dream waited patiently for George to say something else, but he never did, the silence stretching familiar and comfortable between them. Dream closed his eyes, curling up close to his phone in an effort to feel like George really was there with him, solid and warm in his arms.

They fell asleep just like that, and when in the morning Dream woke up first to find the video call still live and George fast asleep with his face smushed into the pillows, he wasn’t one to tell.

He did take a few screenshots, though.

Living with Sapnap was easy and new all at once.

He was messy - leaving his dirty plates on top of the dishwasher without loading it, so that it became a regular part of Dream’s morning routine over the next month to sigh with exasperated fondness and put the dishes away while Patches licked up her breakfast. Sapnap was loud in person, but also quietly comfortable, a gentle pat on Dream’s shoulder, an amused grin in the corner of the room.

He also spent a lot more time on the phone to Karl than Dream realised.

Dream knew the two of them had become close, but he’d thought it was similar to the rest of their wider group - Sapnap spoke to Bad a lot too, and Quackity and Punz and the rest of them. But something about the way his face lit up when a message from Karl brightened his screen made Dream suspicious.

Then there were all the times he walked past Sapnap’s half-open bedroom door to hear him giggling, high-pitched, into his pillow, kicking his feet in the air like a schoolgirl.

Dream didn’t tell him he’d spied on those moments. He felt like he’d witnessed something not meant for him.

"It's weird," Dream said on his nightly voice call with George, petting Patches absently where she was curled up by his thigh. "He's like - *happy*."

"You say that like it's a bad thing," George answered through a yawn.

"No, obviously it's not, I just - I dunno, I haven't ever heard him talk like this to anyone else. Not even when he was fifteen and crushing on a girl in his senior class."

George hummed thoughtfully. "He can't have actually been kicking his feet."

"I swear he was. I *swear*, George, lying on his stomach like that anime he tried to make us watch a couple of years back—"

George snorted, and Dream wished they were on a video call so he could see George's expression. As it was, he had to settle for hearing it through his headphones while he lay on his bed late at night, a sleeping Patches curled up by his side.

"I bet you've done that before," George said after his laughter calmed down.

Dream raised a brow. "What, kicked my feet while on call to you?"

"Well, not necessarily me, but - yeah, actually, I *bet* with me. Have you?"

"No," Dream scoffed. He thought back to all the times he'd been on a call with George over the years, but surely he'd never done *that*. He'd rolled around in his blankets with laughter, fallen off his chair from screaming too loud at minecraft, and fallen asleep on the phone beside him, but he was sure he'd never sunk that low.

Although, were any of the other scenarios really any better?"

"Suuuure," George said sarcastically, dragging out the syllable. "You one hundred percent have. You're in love with me."

Dream spluttered. George was usually the one on the back foot in their teasing, Dream flustering him with constant flirtatious comments, but when George did push back he knew *exactly* what to say to catch Dream off guard.

George burst out laughing, the sound soft with sleep. "Simp."

"Shut up, George." Dream changed the subject, mostly to preserve his own sanity. "What are you up to tomorrow?"

George hummed. "Actually, I might not be online that much."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, Tommy and Wilbur have been asking me to meet up with them for ages, and I thought it was about time I saw them in person for the first time." George cleared his throat, his tone carefully even. "Tommy's rented this water park for the day and they want me to go with them."

"Oh." Dream took a second to process that, fighting back the flare of hot jealousy that pulsed through him. He liked Tommy and Wilbur, and he knew George did too, so it made sense that he'd want to hang out with them in real life at some point. George had never met them in person.

But he hadn't met Dream either, and selfishly Dream hated the thought of George spending time in person with their friends without him.

"It's just for the day," George continued after Dream was silent too long. "A few hours. I'll be back in the evening."

Dream made a noncommittal noise in the back of his throat. He glanced at the time on his phone, raising a brow when he saw it was nearing midnight - which meant it would soon be the early hours of the morning for George. "Don't you need to get some sleep, then?"

"Yeah, I mean, I will soon. When I'm done talking to you."

Dream bit down on his inner cheek, some of the heat inside him simmering down at George's quiet reassurance that he wanted to spend time with Dream. He was being ridiculous, he knew, and the thought that George might be able to pick up on his over-the-top envy was embarrassing.

"Oh," Dream forced himself to say. "Cool. That sounds like fun."

"Yeah, I think it will be." George sounded relieved, and Dream wanted to chastise himself for being such a bad friend and making George feel guilty for wanting to hang out with other people. The most important thing was that George would have a good time. Dream needed to get a handle on his emotions - he had no claim over George, not really.

"Take lots of pictures to show me."

"I think we're going to vlog it," George said quietly. "For Tommy's new channel. He's been bugging me about it for months."

Dream smiled. "Sounds like Tommy."

"Yeah, and Will wants me to meet up with them finally to see if we're soulmates."

A wall of heat crashed over Dream.

He squeezed his eyes shut, battling the rush of irritation that flared through him, the sheer panic at the thought of George touching someone else and a thread tying them together without Dream there to witness it. George belonging to someone else, being part of someone else's life, left a sour taste in his mouth.

He needed to get over himself. Of course George would have friends and soulmates outside of him, that was *healthy*, and Wilbur and Tommy weren't exactly strangers. If they were threaded to George, then maybe they would be to Dream too - they'd only know if Dream ever finally face revealed and they met up in person.

Or maybe they'd be threaded to George, but Dream wouldn't.

Fear squeezed cold fingers around his heart.

"Dream?" George's voice was gentle in his headphones, handling him with care. "It's one of the last chances I'll have to meet them before I come to America, after all."

Dream let out a noisy breath, trying to calm down. George was placating him again, reminding him that he was the one George was moving continents for, crossing a literal entire ocean just for the chance to spend time with him. That had to matter more than some silly water park.

Still, Dream couldn't quite keep the strain out of his voice when he replied. "Make sure Tommy doesn't kill you."

George laughed, some of the tension bleeding out of his tone. "Yeah, I think he's gonna be even more annoying in person. Wilbur knows how to keep him in check."

"Yeah." Dream swallowed, his throat dry. He was struggling to keep track of this conversation, wishing not for the first time that he could teleport. "Right. I guess - you should sleep, you'll have to be up in a few hours."

"I probably should." George yawned, and the soft sound would usually make Dream's heart flutter, but he was still drowning in thoughts of George and Wilbur and Tommy all holding hands while threads tied them together forever. "Stay on the line, though?"

Dream closed his eyes. His heart hurt. He wondered for a second if he should say no, end the call, and roll himself in his blankets with Patches cuddled up against him to try and take his mind off the inevitable spiral he was going to fall down for the rest of the night.

But he always was weak for George.

"Yeah, of course," Dream murmured, shifting onto his back with his phone lying on his chest. "I'll stay here, you go to sleep, Georgie."

George hummed, muttering something inaudible under his breath. He sounded half-asleep already, and despite the heat simmering just beneath Dream's skin, he smiled. "Go to sleep, George."

"Mmyeah." George yawned again, voice muffled - probably by his pillow. Quiet fell over them apart from George's slow breathing, evening out after just a few minutes into the telltale rhythm Dream recognised from years of listening to his life over the internet.

Dream tipped his head back against his pillows and contemplated the ceiling far above his head. He'd been tired earlier, but all traces of sleep had been banished from his mind by the image of George threaded to Tommy and Wilbur. Dream swallowed down his annoyance and irritation, knowing his reaction was unreasonable. He never got like this when Sapnap hung out with other people.

He didn't want to think about why he felt so different with George.

Dream stared at his hands where they splayed across his bedsheets, threads standing out starkly against his skin. The red thread still lay dormant on his ring finger, loose with no hint as to who might be on the other end of it.

Dream closed his eyes and balled his hands into fists.

George complicated everything. Up until Dream started having *feelings*, he'd been quite excited about the prospect of his red thread - even though he was frustrated that he hadn't succeeded in finding them yet, the fact they were out there somewhere gave him hope for his future. As a teenager when he was sad and lonely or angry at the world, he'd imagine his future wife and all their kids surrounding him: an idyllic, white-picket-fence, picture-perfect scene.

But then George appeared. At first, Dream just wanted to impress him, keen to catch the attention of the older guy on the internet who understood how to code and liked playing minecraft. Barely 18, Dream hadn't understood his need to please George yet. He'd just thought he wanted to be George's best friend.

And when they *did* become close, the possessiveness only got worse. Dream wanted to spend all day every day talking to George, carrying him around with him everywhere he went, spending hours together poking fun at each other and then delving into deeper topics late at night, when it

was just the two of them laying their souls bare.

That was when Dream started noticing how different he was with George.

Under the microscope of youtube, the differences only intensified. With an audience hanging off their every move, Dream started to question himself every time he was around George. His tone, his actions, the way George could say his name and it would make Dream drop everything he was doing to focus on him - the fans picked up on all of it, clipping everything into compilations that Dream watched late at night when he spiralled into crisis after crisis.

He was scared to admit what his feelings meant, because if his suspicions were right, if what he knew in his heart really was true, then their friendship that he'd worked so hard to keep for so long could be over.

Dream stared at the phone on his chest, listening to George's quiet breathing from half a world away, and struggled to stay grounded.

Then a quiet murmur crossed the space between them.

“Dream.”

Dream's breath caught in his throat. George's voice was low, slurred and heavy with sleep, and Dream recognised it from all the other times they'd fallen asleep on call to each other. He'd teased George about his sleep talking enough in the past to know what it was when it happened.

A low sigh, and then that same syllable again. *“Dream.”*

George was saying his name in his sleep.

Dream drew in a shaky breath, his heart fluttering beneath his ribs. Warmth spread through him, from his core right down to the tips of his toes, and he dropped his head into his hand to suppress a smile.

He hoped that whatever George was dreaming about, it was nice.

Dream didn't risk saying anything in response in case he woke George up. He rolled onto his side, tucking himself around Patches, and closed his eyes, sleep coming much more easily with the memory of George whispering his name fresh in his mind.

By the time Dream woke up in the morning, the call had already dropped and he had a string of messages from George sitting in their discord dms.

George: Hey sleepyhead

George: I'm heading out in half an hour if you don't wake up I'm gonna be mad at you

George: Your loss

George: Dream

George: Dream Dream Dream Dream

George: Dreeeeeeeeeeam

George: *Fine but don't blame me if you don't hear from me until later*

George: *Idiot <3*

The last message had been sent twenty minutes ago. Dream sat up straight away, typing a reply to let George know he was awake, but when it went unanswered he checked George's discord icon to see it greyed out, last active fifteen minutes ago. Dream made a face. He'd missed him.

A whole day without George seemed like an impossible endeavour. Dream continued staring at his phone, hoping for his icon to turn green again even if just for a few minutes, but nothing happened.

Grumpy, Dream dragged himself out of bed and into the shower.

He found Sapnap downstairs, on the phone to Karl while pouring cereal into his bowl. He raised a brow as soon as he took in Dream's face when he wandered into the kitchen. "What happened to you?"

"Nothing," Dream said, a frown furrowing his brow while he stole a handful of Sapnap's cereal. "George is busy."

"Oh yeah, Tommy's vlog. He's gonna be a disaster." Sapnap grinned, holding up his phone and unplugging his headphones. "Say hi to Dream, Karl."

"Hi Dream!" Karl's voice rang sunnily out from Sapnap's crackly speakers. Dream grunted a response around his mouthful, then swallowed and answered properly - no matter how much of a bad mood he might be in, he shouldn't take that out on his friends.

"Hey, Karl, how are you?"

"I'm good!" Karl sounded happy. "It's still so weird that you and Sap are in the same place now."

"I know, right?" Sapnap grinned. "One month with Dream!"

Dream rolled his eyes, fond. "I still can't believe you put that on twitter."

"Hey, I'll milk you for likes all I want."

Dream leaned back against the counter and stretched his leg out, kicking Sapnap in the knee. Sapnap yelped and retaliated by throwing his spoon at Dream's head, but it missed and clattered onto the counter, bouncing against white granite.

"Clutch," Dream said, eyeing the spoon with amusement.

Sapnap gave him the middle finger.

"Did you say George was out today?" Karl asked, curious, and just like that Dream's mood soured again.

Dream heaved a sigh. "Yeah, he's out with Tommy and Wilbur doing some stupid vlog thing. It's *fine*, like I'm sure he'll have fun and I'm happy for him, but also he's not gonna be around for ages and - I mean, surely a few hours would be enough, right? I don't know why they need him for the whole *day*."

Sapnap raised a brow when he'd finished his mini rant, eyeing him from across the table. From the phone, Karl's voice sounded, slightly confused. "Dude, are you... okay?"

Dream flushed.

Sapnap snorted, his eyes bright. "He's a dramatic shit, Karl, ignore him."

"Hey," Dream said indignantly.

"Well, if you're gonna be without him all day, you should come on Bad's stream with us later," Karl said easily, breaking the tension lingering between them. "He wanted more people to play with."

Dream contemplated the idea, glad that Karl always seemed to know when not to push an issue. He took a deep breath, letting his shoulders drop as he exhaled. Bad always made him feel better, so hopping on a stream with him probably wasn't the worst idea - he had a habit of knowing how to pull Dream out of his own head. Dream could use the distraction. "Yeah, that sounds good actually."

"Cool." Karl sounded happy through Sapnap's crackly speakers.

Sapnap grinned at Dream, a wicked glint to his eye. "At least you can mope with us instead of feeling lonely on your own."

Dream made a face at him and turned to make his breakfast.

Bad was already streaming by the time Dream finished eating and made it back upstairs into his office, and Dream was grateful for his friends when he joined their ongoing voice chat. Messing about with Bad, Sapnap, and Karl kept his mind at bay, though he couldn't resist checking his phone frequently, looking at George's greyed out icon and willing it to turn green.

Quackity joined the stream after the first hour or so, and Dream fell into the familiar rhythm of bickering with him, pleased he had a way to let out some of the irritation simmering beneath his skin. Yelling at Quackity always helped him feel better.

He checked discord while Karl and Sapnap started talking about an anime they'd both been watching recently, enjoying the few minutes of quiet. Still nothing from George, and it had been four hours. Dream bit his lip, debating how needy he wanted to appear versus how much George would laugh at him for it later, and then decided to send him an iMessage just in case that went through where discord was failing him.

Dream: *hey loser I miss your face*

Dream turned back to his computer screen, trying to focus on what his friends were talking about, but his gaze kept drifting back to where his phone was lying by his keyboard on his desk. No reply buzzed through. Dream gritted his teeth, an uncomfortable itch building in his chest.

"Alright, enough," Bad's voice cut through his thoughts. "Stop talking about anime on my stream, guys, you're meant to be helping me gather resources."

"Just get Dream to give you things," Sapnap said, and Karl laughed.

"True! Dream?"

Dream blinked, giving himself a shake as he tuned back into his friends' conversation. "Huh?"

"I need things and I don't want to grind on the server," Bad explained. "Give me free stuff instead?"

“Oh.” Dream mindlessly switched over to DreamXD. “Sure. What do you need?”

Quackity burst out laughing. “That easy?”

“Dream’s *distracted*,” Sapnap said slyly.

Dream swallowed, his stomach churning. He felt too antsy to deal with their teasing, especially in front of thousands of people, but he also didn’t want to ruin Bad’s stream with his sour mood.

“Shut up, I’m feeling nice today.”

“You’re always nice, Dream,” Bad said, but Dream could hear the note of confusion in his tone.

“You don’t actually have to give me things if you don’t want.”

“Yes he does,” Quackity argued. “He said he would, so—”

“No, ignore these muffins, Dream, you do what you want.”

“No fair,” Quackity huffed. “It’s not like Dream hasn’t done it before, George *always* gets what he needs.”

Dream’s chest squeezed. He stared down at his phone again, the screen still dark.

“George isn’t here,” Sapnap pointed out to Quackity, laughter obvious in his voice. “He’s abandoned us for someone else, he’s cheating.”

“How *dare* he. No wonder Dream’s around, I swear I only ever hear from him when George is unavailable or if I’ve been talking to George more than Dream has.” Quackity chuckled at his own joke, and normally Dream would join in, but this time the teasing grated against his already fraying nerves.

“That would only work if George ever spoke to you more than me,” Dream cut in, his tone coming out harsher than he intended. “Which never happens. Obviously.”

“Oh, sure, *obviously*.” Quackity snorted. “Watch this man jump to defend his reputation as number one George simp—”

Dream huffed, leaning away from his mic. He flicked a glance over to Bad’s stream where chat was spamming *jealous dream* and grimaced - he was being too obvious. Even without showing his face, Dream was far too easy to read.

“George isn’t here, don’t hijack my stream by talking about him.” Bad changed the subject smoothly, engaging Karl in discussing plans for the next Tales episode, and Dream let out a quiet sigh of relief. He needed to remember to thank Bad later.

His phone buzzed.

Dream jumped, grabbing it in seconds, and tried not to feel disappointed when the notification that lit up his screen was just a private message from Bad checking in with him.

BadBoyHalo: *u ok?*

Dream: *yeah sorry im being weird*

BadBoyHalo: *dw about it, silly muffin*

BadBoyHalo: *take a break if you need to*

Dream contemplated that for a minute, wondering if he'd be better off leaving the watchful eyes of Bad's audience, but the idea of spending the rest of the day left to his own devices was somehow much worse.

Dream: *thanks, im fine though*

BadBoyHalo: :)

Dream threw himself back into the game properly after that, though he couldn't quite forget about the simmering frustration bubbling up inside him with every hour that passed without a message from George.

By the time Dream's phone finally lit up with a notification from George again, almost seven hours had passed. Bad's stream was long over, and Dream wandered aimlessly around the house as the afternoon turned into early evening and there was still no word from George.

Sapnap eventually forced him to sit down and watch a movie together, but Dream only managed to get two-thirds of the way through before his restless mind lost all focus and he excused himself to retreat to his bedroom.

Lying on his bed with music playing through his headphones and Patches curled up on his chest, Dream closed his eyes and tried to calm his circling thoughts. He texted his mom, checked in with his sister, scrolled through some fanart, and liked a cute picture of him and George hugging when they finally met in real life.

Staring at the digital drawing of a fictional George burying his face in Dream's chest, Dream wondered what it would feel like to have that in reality.

Then finally, *finally*, his phone vibrated in his hands.

Dream lit up as soon as he saw the iMessage notification. He clicked on the message eagerly and sucked in a sharp breath when he was met with a picture of George.

It was a selfie, clearly taken that day, of George standing on some kind of decking in a wetsuit and little life jacket, face scrunchered up in displeasure. He was soaking wet, his hair curling in a way that looked *good*.

The caption just said: *I'm wet.*

Dream burst out laughing.

He laughed harder than he probably should - certainly more than the joke warranted, it was fairly standard between them in private - but once he started he couldn't stop. Relief flooded through him, cooling the intense frustration that had been bothering him all day.

He typed out a reply without thinking, sinking into his mattress with a smile at his lips.

Dream: *Hot*

George: *Loser*

George: *I am so uncomfortable right now I am never forgiving Tommy*

Dream: *You're so whiny*

Dream: *Did you have a good time?*

George: *Yh*

Another picture came through, this time a selfie of George sandwiched between Tommy and Wilbur. The three of them wore matching grins, all looking worse for the wear in life jackets, though for some unfathomable reason Wilbur seemed to be wearing a suit under his. George looked small between them, tucked under Wilbur's shoulder with Tommy leaning into his side.

Dream swallowed.

Before he could think of a reasonable response, another text came through.

George: *Heading home now, will fill you in properly later*

George: *But they're my soulmates!!*

Dream felt like a bucket of ice water had just been thrown over his head.

His ribs hurt when he drew in a shaky breath, his heart faltering. Soulmates. George had soulmates over there in the UK, people he could touch and see and laugh with in person, and it wasn't *fair* because Dream could do that too, he *would* do all that if he had the fortune to live in the same place as George did.

He closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths before replying.

Dream: *Get on video call*

George: *Lmao needy*

George: *I will once I'm home*

George: *Fill me in on what you were doing while I'm travelling*

Dream bit his lip, tossing his head back against the pillow so violently that Patches let out a displeased meow. He petted her back where she lay on his stomach, letting the familiar feeling of her soft fur under his fingers calm him down. He was still wearing his gloves from the stream earlier, glad that he couldn't see his threads while he thought about George connecting with two people that weren't him.

He typed out a reply to George, telling him about Bad's stream and the movie he'd half-watched with Sapnap, then sent a picture of Patches curled up on his chest. George replied sporadically, not yet home, and it wasn't until Dream's phone lit up with a call another hour later that he finally relaxed.

George called him over facetime - a platform they'd used before, but nowhere near as frequently as discord. Dream was quietly pleased to think that this would just be for them, none of their friends able to see that George was calling him directly right now.

He put a finger over his front camera and accepted the call, instantly relaxing when George's face came into view.

“Hey,” George said, breaking into a smile as soon as the call connected. He looked tired, his hair still curlier than normal, messy from a day full of activity. He was in his apartment in London, Dream recognised the hallway, but it looked like he’d literally just got home - kicking his shoes off and wandering into his tiny kitchen.

“Hey,” Dream replied. “You look like a mess.” A lie: actually, George looked annoyingly good with his hair drying all ruffled like that, but Dream didn’t want to give himself away.

“Oh *thanks*.” George snorted, running two fingers through his hair while he held his phone up in front of him. “I’ve spent the entire day falling over and getting pushed into a lake, cut me some slack.”

“Falling over?”

“Yeah, apparently I’m really clumsy and have no sense of balance. I am *covered* in bruises.”

Dream wheezed out a laugh. “I’d pay to see that.”

“We filmed it all. Tommy’s editor is gonna hate us.”

Dream hummed, wondering what he’d have to bargain in order to get Tommy to give him the unedited footage.

“Take your hand off the camera,” George complained as he opened his fridge. “I’ve been without you for hours, you have to give me something more than a blurry finger.”

“Now who’s needy?” Dream pressed his lips together to hide his smile, obediently switching over cameras and pointing it at Patches, who was still napping on his chest. George cooed, surfacing from the fridge with a bottle of water and grinning so hard at his screen that his eyes scrunched up.

“There’s my little baby, look how cute she is! Tell her I love her.”

“George loves you,” Dream said without hesitation, running his gloved hand through her fur. Patches flicked an ear at him in return. “Your hair’s all wet, George.”

“Yeah, spent all day falling in a lake, remember?” George took a swig from his water bottle while he padded through to his bedroom, falling back on his bed and holding his phone high above his head. The image of him with his messy hair splaying out across his pillow made Dream’s heart squeeze. “Ugh, Wilbur is *so* strong, he literally pulled me out of the water when I couldn’t get back onto the platform.”

“He is, huh.” Dream bit down on his inner cheek, doing his level best to ignore the surge of jealousy flaring through him.

George continued on, oblivious. “Yeah, he’s stupidly tall too. Taller even than you, I think.”

“We don’t know that for sure,” Dream muttered under his breath.

“Tommy’s taller than me too, which is really annoying.” George broke out into a grin, rolling onto his stomach and propping his phone up in front of him. “He’s such a little shit, he snuck up on me as soon as I arrived and touched my elbow so the first time I noticed him was when we got threaded together.”

Dream’s stomach dropped.

“I’m soulmates with *both* of them, can you believe it?” George’s dark eyes sparkled through the camera, and he sounded so excited, his words running together in his eagerness to tell Dream everything. “Tommy started shrieking as soon as he grabbed me. His thread is on my right hand - my little finger, which I told him is because he’s a child. He nearly shoved me into a bush for that.”

Dream gave a half-hearted chuckle.

“Wilbur was late, and Tommy pranked him by telling him we were going to a restaurant so he was wearing an *actual suit*. With him, I think I knew even before he hugged me - like, he was walking towards me and I just got this *feeling*, like in my gut, that he was gonna get one of my threads.” George paused for breath, staring into the camera. “Is that what happened with you and Sapnap when you first met?”

Dream licked his lips. “I think so, yeah. We were just kids though, I don’t really remember.”

“How can you not remember? I don’t think I’m ever going to forget this feeling.”

Dream hummed noncommittally in response. George furrowed his brow, giving him a *look* through the camera, and Dream knew he was probably picking up on something odd in Dream’s tone, but he couldn’t bring himself to fix it when his stomach felt sour.

“Alright, what’s going on with you?” George asked finally, blunt as ever.

Dream frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Something’s clearly up. You’ve been acting weird all day, Bad told me about his stream earlier, and now you’re barely stringing more than two words together at a time.”

“Bad talked to you?”

“He messaged, yeah.” George fixed the camera with such a stern look that Dream felt like he was seeing straight into his soul. At times like this he was extra glad George couldn’t read his facial expressions, because Dream knew without a doubt that his sullen mood would give him away in seconds.

“It’s nothing,” Dream insisted, trying to pull himself together. The last thing he wanted was to ruin George’s good day. “I can’t believe Bad would message you about that, literally nothing happened.”

“It clearly wasn’t *nothing*, Dream.”

“It was. I’m being ridiculous, ignore me.” Dream attempted to shake off his weird mood. “Tell me more about the water park.”

George squinted at the camera. He looked so relaxed like this, lying on his bed talking to Dream like they had countless times in the past, drowning in his oversized sweater. The sleeves were pulled over his gloved hands, hiding all but the tips of his fingers.

Dream stared at his hands and tried not to think about the two new threads he must have tying him to Wilbur and Tommy.

“What are you being ridiculous about?” George asked after a minute.

Dream pursed his lips, starting to tell George to drop it, but George overrode him. “I’m serious, Dream, tell me. I don’t like it when you’re mad and I can’t figure out why.”

Dream's heart tugged. He grimaced, instantly feeling guilty - he didn't want to make George worry. "I'm not *mad*, not really. Not at you."

"Then what is it?"

Dream blew out a slow breath, his voice small. "You're gonna laugh at me."

"I mean, probably," George agreed, and Dream snorted at his honesty. "But I'd still rather know so we can talk about it. Don't go stewing in silence on me."

Dream bit down on his inner cheek. George knew him so well, sometimes it still shocked Dream how easily he could read him. He studied George's high cheekbones, the way his hair was ruffled and fluffed up from the water while he spoke. "It's just - Tommy and Wilbur."

"What about them?"

"They're your soulmates." The words turned to ash in Dream's mouth.

George raised a brow. "Yeah? And?"

"*And*, it's not fair that they got to meet you first." Dream finally blurted out what was bothering him, irritation obvious in his voice. "They just get to - to call you up and demand to spend all day with you, you're gonna be on Tommy's *channel* and I'm just supposed to sit here and, what, watch you with them and be fine with it?"

George's brows both lifted so high they disappeared beneath his hair. He tilted his head, studying the camera while Dream seethed in quiet silence.

"Today wasn't about you," George said finally. "Like, at all."

"I *know*." Dream hissed, and with the floodgates open he struggled to stop the words from spilling out. "That's the *problem*. Or, not actually a problem, because I'm glad you have friends you can go and have a good time with, but it isn't *fair*, George. It isn't fair that I don't get to do that with you just because I didn't have the fortune to be born in the same country as you. It bothers me to hear about how they're your *soulmates* when I don't even know for sure that there'll be a thread between us when we finally meet, and now you're—"

"Wait," George interrupted, narrowing his eyes. "You're *jealous*?"

"I'm not jealous," Dream defended reflexively.

"That's what this is about? *Seriously*, Dream?"

"I'm not jealous!"

"You've got some nerve." George snorted, the sound derisive. He rolled his eyes. "As if you can *dare* be jealous of me finally meeting some of my soulmates when you literally have Sapnap right there."

Dream stopped short. "What's Sapnap got to do with this?"

"Everything!"

"You're not making any sense, George."

"No, *you're* the one not making any sense." The hard, jagged edge was back in George's tone. His

dark eyes were flinty when he looked at the camera. “Sapnap’s been all over twitter - *one month with Dream*, what even is that shit? And you’re always talking about him, you were on Bad’s stream together today and you literally could have been sitting in the same room. He gets to see you all day every day forever, and you’re mad at me for spending *one* day with Wilbur and Tommy? *Seriously?*”

Dream blinked. His irritation dissipated while he tried to read between the lines, to figure out what George was actually telling him behind the sharp words. “You’re... jealous of Sapnap?”

“No,” George scoffed, but Dream figured he was lying through his teeth, just like Dream had been.

“Oh.” Dream leaned his head back against his pillow, still aiming the camera at Patches. “You’re jealous of him because - what, he’s around me?” The thought warmed Dream’s insides.

“No,” George muttered, avoiding looking at the camera. “Or, only if that’s why you’re jealous of Wilbur and Tommy.”

Dream didn’t deny it. Instead, he focused on what he thought George was telling him - that he wanted to be around Dream badly enough that it hurt for Sapnap to be here without him. All the envy Dream had dealt with today, maybe that had been George’s normal ever since Sapnap moved in with him.

“Oh,” Dream said as the realisation settled over him. “God, we’re stupid.”

George spluttered. “*You’re* stupid, idiot.”

“No, listen to me, George.” Dream reached out and combed his fingers through Patches’ fur, letting George see his gloved hand. “I want you here. You know that, right?”

George clicked his tongue but otherwise didn’t answer, which in itself told Dream enough. He clearly hadn’t been obvious enough about how desperately he *ached* to have George by his side.

“I want you here so badly,” Dream continued, watching George’s eyes dart back towards the camera on his phone screen. “So does Nick. We’re not - we’re not complete without you here, you do know that, right?”

“Simp.”

Dream smiled, not dissuaded. He knew George couldn’t handle emotional conversations, but Dream was usually very good at talking about his feelings, so he persevered. “And yeah, I was jealous today. It might be kind of a dick move, considering that you were having fun, but I basically just sat around all day waiting for you to show up on discord again. I don’t know what to do with myself when you rip your attention away from me.”

Despite himself, the corner of George’s mouth tugged up. “I know. You liked a bunch of art of us on twitter, you usually only do that when you’re moping.”

Dream flushed.

“And Bad said I should be nice to you,” George continued thoughtfully. “Or, like, he told me to go easy on you. He implied you were having a hard time dealing with my absence.”

Dream didn’t know whether he loved or hated Bad for outing him. He chewed his inner cheek, forever glad that George couldn’t see him, because his face felt like it was on fire. “I mean, he’s exaggerating, but yeah.”

“Is he?” George asked mildly.

“Shut up, George.”

George laughed, the sound much more gentle this time around. He was smiling when he said, “I missed you too, Dream.”

Warmth flooded Dream’s chest, and he felt settled enough to return to their usual teasing. “Oh yeah? You weren’t too busy having fun with Wilbur and Tommy to think about me?”

“You can’t get mad at me for hanging out with them,” George complained. “Seriously. You literally have your mum and sister and Sapnap right there, and I don’t—”

He cut himself off quickly.

Dream sat up, interest piqued. “Don’t what?”

“Nothing.” George’s face closed off, his expression turning unreadable even to Dream. “You dislodged Patches.”

“Hm?” Dream glanced up to find that his moving had woken her up. She gave him a disgruntled meow and stood, stretching before she jumped down to the ground and scurried out of his partially-open door. Dream watched her go with a pout. “I’ve been abandoned.”

“Serves you right for being a dick,” George said lightly.

“Hey.”

“I’ll forgive you, though. I’d miss me too, I’m great.”

“George!” Dream rolled his eyes, glad to see George smiling again, amusement lighting up his dark eyes. “You’re so annoying, I take it all back.”

“No you don’t. You spammed me on discord *and* iMessage and you were talking about me on Bad’s stream, you tried to get my attention on just about every platform available to you.”

“Shut up,” Dream whined, because when George said it aloud like that his behaviour sounded kind of pathetic. “I’m used to having you around all the time, it’s weird when you don’t respond.”

“You got rejected on every available platform, too,” George said with a sharp grin.

Dream rolled his eyes. “Wait until you’re here. I’ll just follow you around the house all day, you won’t be able to ignore me in person.”

“Oh no,” George gasped, feigning horror. “Constant Dream time, whatever will I do?”

“I really can’t wait until you’re just across the hall,” Dream said, his tone softening. “Or even better, in the same room as me. You do know that, don’t you?”

George smiled so wide his eyes scrunchered up, and Dream’s heart fluttered against his ribs. “I know, dumbass.”

“Good.” Dream let out a breath, his camera pointing at his empty bedsheets now that Patches had gone. “Have you heard anything back from the visa people yet?”

“Not yet, no.”

“You at least got the confirmation email though, right?”

George made a vague noise in the back of his throat, eyes darting to the right.

Dream frowned. He knew what it looked like when George was dodging a question. “George? Did they send you the link to check up on the status of your application?”

“Mmm, not sure.”

“You should have an email.” Dream sat up, tucking his knees into his chest and leaning back against his headboard. “The website said you’ll get an automated confirmation with a tracking link as soon as you submit your forms, did that happen?”

“Dunno.”

“Can you check?” Dream clicked his tongue, slightly annoyed. George was a procrastinator to an epic degree, but he’d thought that this application would be important enough to George to make sure he did it properly. Dream sent him all the evidence last week, so he’d had plenty of time.

George made a face. “My computer is all the way over there.”

“It’s literally on the other side of your tiny bedroom, George.”

“Yeah, but I’m comfy.”

Dream rolled his eyes, trying not to get distracted by how cute George was when he whined - his downfall on several occasions and the reason why he frequently found himself halfway through editing another video for George after swearing he’d never do so again. “I literally did it all for you, all you had to do was press submit. You *did* do that, didn’t you?”

George went suspiciously quiet.

Dream’s gut clenched. “*George!*”

“Okay, hear me out,” George said, rolling onto his back and holding his phone over his head so he could point a finger at the camera. “I haven’t submitted the application yet—”

Dream felt like he’d been sucker punched. The air froze in his lungs, fear clutching at him - what if George didn’t actually *want* to apply for his visa? Moving country was a huge deal after all, what if he was having second thoughts, what if he didn’t—

“Don’t start freaking out,” George interrupted his spiralling. “I wanna - I wanted to talk to you about this, but I didn’t - want to scare you off, or anything.”

Dream swallowed, senses on high alert. “Scare me off? From what?”

“I don’t want the three month visa.”

Disappointment trickled down Dream’s spine like cold water. He closed his eyes.

“I want the permanent one.”

Dream froze.

“...What?”

"I want the - the one that means I get to stay in America forever." George both looked and sounded nervous - his tone tense, his eyes darting uncertainly around his bedroom, never looking directly at the camera. He eased himself upright on his bed across the ocean, leaning into his pillows. "The green card, is it? Just - just the type that means I wouldn't have to leave once I got there."

Dream could hardly believe what he was hearing. "*What?*"

"I know it'll take longer, and it'll probably be more complicated and harder to get, but I—" George let out a frustrated sigh, chewing on the end of his long sleeve. "I can't imagine finally getting there and meeting you - and Nick and everyone else - and then having to turn around and come back. I don't want to do that, Dream."

Dream felt like he'd been punched all over again, but for entirely different reasons. He stared at the image of George on his screen, wondering if he was having some kind of stroke. "You want to - *what*!?"

"Please say something other than what," George said, flicking a quick glance right at the camera.

Dream's thoughts were a scrambled mess. He tried to sort through them, to pick apart whatever was happening, because it very much sounded like George wanted to come and live with him forever. Permanently. To *never leave*.

Dream could have George by his side indefinitely.

What was about all he could manage.

But George was staring at him, anxiously chewing on his sleeve, so Dream forced himself to formulate some kind of sentence to reassure him.

"Okay, let's - start doing that then. Like, now."

George's eyes widened. "Right now?"

"Yeah, I mean - I haven't looked into it, but I'm guessing it's gonna take a while, and we want you here as soon as possible, yeah?" Dream sat up, picking up his phone and carrying it over to his desk, making sure to always keep the camera pointed away from him. He booted up his computer. "I'm pretty sure getting a green card needs a bunch of different evidence—"

"You mean you're okay with it?" George asked, sounding strangled.

Dream frowned while he typed in his password. "Why wouldn't I be okay with it?"

"I - I mean, I'm... kinda asking to move in with you permanently, Dream."

Dream paused. After a second, he broke into a giant grin. "Yeah, you are, aren't you?"

George sputtered. "I thought you'd have more questions."

"Should I?" Dream considered that for a minute, wondering if he maybe should feel more apprehensive at the prospect of his best friend moving countries to stay with him indefinitely. He couldn't make his emotions give him anything other than pure joy and excitement, though.

"I guess," Dream continued after another few seconds of thought, "the only thing that would bother me is having to wait longer to finally meet you."

"Yeah, I know." George went quiet, and Dream picked his phone up and propped it up on his desk

so he could properly watch George's face where he still lay on his bed. "But I - I kept thinking about it, Dream."

"Thinking about what?"

"Getting there only to have to leave again." George took in a deep breath, and Dream could see he was struggling to find the right words - George always spoke more through his actions than he did verbally, and just then his expression showed his clear reluctance. "I kept thinking about finally being in our house, with you and Sapnap and everyone else right on our doorstep, and then I thought about three months passing and having to come back to the UK. To leave you all behind again. I don't think I could do it."

Dream softened, staring fondly at his phone screen instead of focusing on his google search. "Aw, Georgie."

"Don't tease me about this," George said, biting his lip.

"I'm not, I swear. I don't want you to have to leave when you get here either."

"You don't?"

"Of course not. I'd keep you forever if I could, you know that."

George clicked his tongue, suppressing a smile. Dream could see it in the tightening around his mouth, the way his eyes sparkled in the dim light from his lamp. It was already dark in England. "Every time I got close to submitting the visa application, I had to go and book return flights, and I - I didn't want to. I want a one-way ticket to Florida. If they want to get rid of me that badly they can deport me, I don't care."

"No, George, you can't do that!"

"Why not? I don't want to *leave*, Dream."

"I know, but we can't let you get deported." Dream shook his head, turning back to his computer screen and opening the official green card information link at the top of his google search results. "They wouldn't let you back *in* then, and that would be the worst possible outcome ever."

"I don't even care, once I'm there I'm not leaving."

Dream bit his lip, his cheeks aching with the strength of his smile. "I mean, I don't want you to, but also you can't actually get deported, George."

"If they try and make me leave, they're gonna have to, because I am not voluntarily coming back to the UK once I've finally made it there."

The strength of George's conviction warmed Dream's insides until he felt full to bursting. He couldn't even imagine how sure George must be, to be willing to leave behind his entire life in England permanently to come and live with Dream and Sapnap - George might be terrible at talking about feelings, but his behaviour said it all.

Dream let out a quiet laugh, opening up discord. "Jump on your computer and I'll screenshare with you. Let's figure this out."

"Ugh, effort." George huffed, but he was still smiling. "Can't you fill out everything for me and I'll just hit send?"

“No, George - but I will talk you through it if you like.”

“Spoilsport.” George rolled out of bed a minute later, dragging himself over to his desk with much complaining, and Dream just laughed as they switched over to discord and started going through the forms together.

He’d do just about anything if it meant he got to keep George in America with him forever.

Hours passed quickly while Dream and George talked through the green card application, figuring out what evidence they’d need to gather and how much more complicated it would be to get things in progress. They came up with a vague timeline together, and if everything went according to plan then it was entirely possible that George could be in Florida in time for next Christmas.

The thought made Dream’s chest physically ache.

He stared at his computer screen, still open on discord, his knee jiggling up and down. George was gone, falling asleep at his desk until Dream finally sent him to bed - he’d had a day full of much more physical activity than he was used to, after all. Dream missed him already, which was slightly ridiculous.

He stretched, turning off his monitor with his thoughts full of evidence and forms and all the documentation he’d have to start gathering to get George’s application sent off as quickly as possible. He got to his feet, wandering out of his bedroom to hunt down some food - he’d sort of forgotten to grab dinner in his excitement over George’s decision.

Opening his bedroom door and stepping out into the hallway, Dream almost had a heart attack when he found Sapnap standing outside the door to the bathroom, peering curiously in Dream’s direction.

Dream jumped, pressing a hand over his loudly-beating heart. “*Shit.* You scared me.”

“Hi,” Sapnap said without preamble. “Was that George you were talking to?”

“Yeah, why?”

“You sounded happier than you did earlier.”

Dream grinned, leaning back against the wall and figuring he should probably apologise for his earlier behaviour now that everything was sorted again. “Yeah, things are better now. Sorry for being a dick all day.”

Sapnap waved him away. He looked curious, studying Dream from across the hall with narrowed eyes and a slight tilt to his head. “You’re different with him. You know that, right?”

“Different? How?”

“You’re just, like.” Sapnap pursed his lips, clearly thinking hard about whatever he was going to say next. Dream gave him time. “I don’t know, dude, you’re just different.”

“Oh.” Dream turned to head down the stairs, beckoning for Sapnap to follow him - he hadn’t spent much time with his friend yet that day and he’d missed him, too. “I don’t really know what you mean.”

“You get very happy when George is around, and very upset when he isn’t.”

Dream pursed his lips. “Yeah, okay, I know I was being a jealous asshole earlier, George already told me off for it. I swear I’m gonna try and be better in the future, I know it’s only natural for him to have other friends.”

Sapnap was quiet for a long moment, just watching as Dream entered the kitchen and started getting out ingredients for pasta. “Do you ever think that’s weird?”

“What’s weird?”

“That you’re jealous,” Sapnap said, leaning against the counter by Dream’s elbow. “Can we put bacon in the pasta too?”

“Are you eating this with me?”

“Obviously.”

“Alright.” Dream reopened the fridge, getting out the bacon while he thought about Sapnap’s question. “And no, I don’t think it’s weird - I mean, I know I’m a bit possessive, but I try and keep a handle on it most of the time.”

“That’s what I mean, though.” Sapnap frowned. “You’re a lot more possessive of George than you are of me or any of our other friends.”

Dream paused. “Am I?”

“Dude, you can’t tell me you haven’t noticed.” Sapnap snorted. “I know the whole ‘DNF’ thing is an internet joke, but like - you were literally losing your mind this morning because George didn’t reply to you for a few hours.”

Dream clicked his tongue, nerves jumping in his stomach. He wasn’t that obvious, was he? Who else picked up on this? Well, aside from the fans, but Dream thought he was fairly good at playing off their teasing as a joke.

It *was* a joke. Mostly.

“It wasn’t just that,” he told Sapnap, focusing on cutting up bacon. “I was jealous because he’s soulmates with Wilbur and Tommy.”

“Yeah, he told me about that.” Sapnap grinned. “Isn’t it cool?”

“No,” Dream muttered. He let out a sigh. “No, it is. I’m happy for him.”

Sapnap raised a brow. “You could sound more convincing.”

“I’m doing my best.”

“Being soulmates with them doesn’t mean he’s any less likely to be soulmates with you,” Sapnap pointed out. “You’re such an idiot sometimes.”

“*I know that.*” Dream grimaced, staring down at his hands. He pulled off his gloves, shoving them in his pockets, and then held his left hand out to Sapnap, red thread lying dormant on his ring finger. “But then I look down and see this and everything gets messed up again.”

Sapnap blinked at him slowly. “Your red thread?”

Dream went back to chopping, keeping quiet. He felt jittery, like Sapnap was getting dangerously close to something Dream never let himself think about. They hadn't talked much about Dream's red thread over the month since Sapnap arrived.

"What's George got to do with your red thread?" Sapnap asked eventually, genuinely confused.

Dream tipped his head back and laughed. He was worried he was being too obvious, but Sapnap was one of the most unobservant people he knew, so Dream probably didn't have anything to worry about. Not from him, at least.

"Wait, are you—?" Sapnap's brows shot up. "Dude, do you want it to be *George*?"

Dream faltered. The knife slipped out of his grasp, slicing into the tip of his finger, and he cursed, turning on the tap and shoving the cut under running water.

"Oh my God, you *do*!" Sapnap was staring at him in shock. "Are you fucking *kidding* me?"

"Shut up," Dream huffed, reaching for a bandaid from one of the drawers - he was sure his mom had bought some when they moved in. "There's no point thinking about it, he can't be on the other end of my thread."

"I can't believe you *want* him to be!" Sapnap floundered, leaning back against the counter with his gaze fixed on Dream. "Wow. Wow. I'm gonna expose that DNF is real on twitter and get a million new followers."

Dream snorted. "Idiot, no you won't. It isn't even real, I'm not - I *can't* be his soulmate, I've never met him."

"Are you sure about that?" Sapnap watched while Dream applied pressure to his finger, stopping the bleeding. "I mean - it was just someone you walked past in the crowd that day, right? It could be anyone."

"George has never been to New York," Dream pointed out, despondent. He avoided looking at the red thread on his hand.

"Do you know that for sure?"

"He's never mentioned it."

"Yeah, but I bet you've never talked about every single holiday you went on as a kid, either." Sapnap tilted his head. "And you haven't told him you have a red thread. What if—?"

"Don't," Dream interrupted, gritting his teeth. "Just - just don't."

"But—"

"It can't be him," Dream said loudly, drowning in the deafening thud of his pulse in his ears. "He can't be, Sapnap, it's impossible - he's *never* mentioned his threads, not ever, he doesn't like talking about soulmate stuff. He also said he thinks we're going to be soulmates when we meet, which means he thinks we're gonna touch and get a yellow thread and that'll be it. He's probably right."

Dream didn't know why that thought made him feel so bitter.

Sapnap frowned at him. "You don't want a yellow thread with him?"

Dream shrugged his shoulders, helpless. "I don't know? I - if it's the only way I can have him, then yeah, of course I do. But..."

"But that's not the only way you want him," Sapnap finished, disbelieving. His face scrunched up. "Ugh, I can't believe those words just came out of my mouth. I do *not* need to think of the two of you like - no, okay, changing the subject now."

Despite his inner turmoil, Dream snorted.

"Maybe you should talk to him," Sapnap said after a beat.

Dream shot him a glare. "Excuse me?"

"What? It's probably a good idea, isn't it?"

"That sounds like a *horrible* idea," Dream disagreed. "George hates talking about soulmate stuff as it is, he hardly ever brings it up with me - and he's literally just started applying for a permanent visa, the last thing I want is to scare him off from coming here at all by making him feel like he's trapped."

"Wait, what?" Sapnap asked. "George is applying for a permanent visa?"

Oh, shit. Dream forgot they hadn't talked to Sapnap about that yet. He gave Sapnap an apologetic smile. "Yeah, he just told me about it tonight. He doesn't want to apply for the three month visa, he wants a permanent one."

Sapnap continued to stare at him while he processed the new information. Dream watched his expression change as the news started sinking in - confusion to shock to excitement to pure, unadulterated glee.

"Hell fucking *yeah!*" Sapnap punched the air, grinning wide. "I never wanted him to leave anyway. Once he's here, he's here."

"Yeah." Dream smiled - everything sounded so easy when Sapnap was the one to say it. "We started looking at the application, it's complicated but doable. We might be able to get him here in time for Christmas."

"That's awesome. We can start getting his room ready."

"Yeah."

"And I mean, that's great and all, but maybe you really should talk to him about your thread." Sapnap tilted his head, watching as Dream started throwing ingredients into the pan, the smell of sizzling bacon filling the kitchen. "Do you really want him to come all the way here and then find out the first time he sees you that you've got a romantic soulmate? It was a shock for *me*, and I don't have any secret feelings for you."

Dream almost choked. "Neither does *George*!"

"Are you sure about that?"

"...Yes?" Dream turned to Sapnap, raising a brow, his heart stuttering in his chest. "I'm not under any delusions that this isn't entirely one sided. And it's *fine*, I can - I'll handle it, I can deal with being his best friend. I *love* being his best friend, I'm not gonna do anything that might ruin that."

Sapnap pursed his lips. "I think you're being an idiot."

"Oh yeah? Want me to ask you about the late-night conversations I can hear you having with Karl? You giggle like a schoolgirl."

Sapnap flushed. He backed up a step, hesitating, and Dream sent him a quick look - he'd expected a shouted insult or your mom joke in response, like their usual teasing, but Sapnap actually looked *nervous*.

"You haven't heard anything," Sapnap said after a few seconds, tense. "Right?"

"Heard anything like what?"

"Nothing, just—" Sapnap twisted away, ducking his head. "It's nothing. You're right, I don't want you to ask me about this."

Dream put down his spatula, leaving the pan to simmer for a moment while he gave Sapnap his full attention. Sapnap wasn't looking at him, his fingers digging into his pockets, uncharacteristically uncomfortable - Dream didn't think he'd ever seen Sapnap avoiding him like this since he'd moved in.

"Okay, I can drop it," Dream said gently. "But you know I don't judge, right? And you can tell me anything."

"Yeah, I know." Sapnap looked up at him. "Maybe when I've had more time to - I don't know, think it through, or whatever. If I want the advice of a giant green dude I'll come find you."

Dream snorted. "Happy to help."

Sapnap swiftly changed the subject, talking about a new meme Quackity sent him over twitter, and Dream let the words wash over him while he finished making dinner. Patches appeared a few minutes later asking for her own food, and Sapnap rushed to feed her, still on his mission to convince her that he wasn't a dangerous invader in her home and he was in fact a friendly uncle. She was slowly getting used to his presence, even winding around his ankles for a second while he scraped food into her bowl.

Dream watched them with a small smile, imagining George next to them, helping him with dinner, or sitting at the table playing on his phone. Patches would like George too, Dream was sure of it. He'd fit right in.

Soon. Just a few months to go and George could be here with them.

Dream turned back to his cooking, thoughts half a world away.

George and Sapnap were both obsessed with fortnite, and it was driving Dream up the wall.

Dream would be the first to admit he wasn't actually much of a gamer outside of minecraft. He'd much rather watch a football game on the TV while eating his favourite snack with Patches in his lap than learn how to run around shooting other people in some weird battle royale game, or whatever fortnite actually was.

But George and Sapnap both liked playing it, which meant that Dream had to learn how to play too if he wanted to spend any time with either of them ever again.

“No, Dream, that’s not how you use your gun.” George’s voice was bubbling with suppressed laughter in Dream’s headphones. “You’ve got the controls all wrong. You’re meant to aim *before* you fire—”

“I know that, idiot!” Dream huffed, trying to get his fingers to obey him in the correct order. “This is nothing like minecraft.”

“That’s kinda to be expected!” Sapnap cackled so loud that Dream could hear him from down the hall.

Dream let out a frustrated sigh, ducking behind the meagre shelter he’d managed to build while at least three other players all shot at him. He was sitting at the desk in his bedroom rather than in his office, seeing as they weren’t streaming this, but rather just playing in their own time. Dream had been quite happily reading a book on his bed and bugging George to get on call with him until George said he was already in a call with Sapnap while they were playing together.

Dream caved and asked to be taught how to play, and he was regretting everything already.

“Dream’s dead,” Sapnap said, far too gleefully in Dream’s opinion. “Leave him, George, come help me get this loot—”

“No, hold on,” George disagreed. “I’m nearly at him - stay behind the screen, Dream, I’m two minutes away.”

Dream dropped all his usual pride. “Come save me, George, at least *someone* loves me.”

“Hey, it’s not my fault you suck at this!” Sapnap grumbled.

“If you hadn’t both ditched me the second we landed—”

“It’s called *tactics*, you fucking idiot—”

“Alright, children, stop fighting,” George interrupted them, and Dream could hear his grin. “I’m here, Dream, you can come out now.”

Dream grimaced. “They’re gonna shoot me.”

“No they won’t, I’ve got you. Come on, I’m in the car.”

“If I insta-die as soon as I come out from behind here—”

“You won’t, Dream,” George said, voice fond. “Don’t you trust me?”

Well, there was no way Dream could say no to that.

Hesitantly, he moved his character out from behind his shelter, bracing himself for conflict, but none came. Of the three shooters that had been after him, two were now dead and one had fled, George coming to his rescue just like he’d promised. Dream raced his avatar to join George’s in the car. “My hero.”

“Don’t you forget it,” George giggled, starting to drive towards Sapnap. Shitty fortnite music blasted from the speakers, and Sapnap joined in, singing along tunelessly and very, very loudly.

“Nick, I can hear you down the hall,” Dream complained.

“Enjoy my serenade!” Sapnap started singing louder, and Dream rolled his eyes, his chest warm

despite his irritation.

“You’re so annoying.”

“Shut up, this is a *privilege*. George wishes he could hear me singing down the hall.”

“I do, actually,” George agreed for once. “I sent my application in two days ago and I *still* haven’t heard anything.”

Dream fought back a smile. “George, it’s gonna take more than two days for the government to make a decision.”

“*Why* though. Can’t you throw money at it, Dream?”

Sapnap burst out laughing.

“I’m trying,” Dream said weakly. George’s whining pulled at that specific part of his brain that he found it impossible to say no to. “I literally filled most of the form out for you, and I sent you all the evidence with the dates and everything you needed—”

“I know, but now I just have to *wait*.” There was a dull thunk, like George hit his head against his desk. “Make it hurry up.”

“I would if I could, George, but there’s not really anything more I can do.”

“Then what’s the point of you,” George huffed, his smile audible.

Dream shook his head, battling the ridiculous amount of *fondness* he felt whenever George did something cute and endearing like this. The more time went on, the longer he spent on hours and hours of calls with George, the more the lines blurred around what they were until Dream’s head was as fuzzy as his feelings.

He needed to get a grip.

“Any time you want to get here, guys,” Sapnap said dryly. “I’m just battling the rest of the group while you kick about doing nothing...”

“We’re having a roadtrip,” George said happily, and Dream’s heart *tugged*.

“Yeah, we are,” he chimed in, watching his avatar sit comfortably beside George’s. “Not that it would be this way round in real life. *I’d* be the one driving.”

“No, you’re gonna teach me and then I’ll drive you everywhere,” George argued. “So it *would* be just like this, actually.”

“Well, not straight away.”

“No, but I’m a fast learner and American driving is easier than it is over here. I’ll pass my test in like a week.”

Dream laughed. “I’m not sure that’s possible, George.”

“Well, I’ll make it happen just so I can drive you around and prove you wrong.”

“Sure, whatever.” Dream gave in, too fond to argue.

Sapnap muttered something inaudible under his breath.

“What?” George asked, and Sapnap heaved a sigh.

“I was just saying, you two better not make me third wheel like this in real life or I’m gonna kick you both out.”

“You can’t kick us out of *our* house,” Dream exclaimed, just as George said:

“We’re gonna be even worse in real life, actually.”

Dream faltered. “What?”

George laughed, steering the car through the game map with more expertise than Dream possessed, considering this was his first time playing fortnite. “Yeah, if it’s this simple for me to get Dream to do what I want when I’m an ocean away, imagine how much easier it’ll be when I’m standing right in front of him.”

Sapnap burst out laughing. “Oh, Dream, you’re *fucked*.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” Dream argued weakly. “I don’t just give George whatever he wants.”

He was met with two resounding rounds of laughter.

Dream heaved a sigh. “I hate you both.”

“Idiot,” George said affectionately.

“Maybe I’ll just go live with Karl if you’re both being impossible,” Sapap said, then cleared his throat awkwardly. “Which, uh, by the way. He asked me to go visit him.”

Dream paused when those words registered. “He what?”

“Yeah, he - he asked. Last night, we were just talking but then he - he said there’s this thing Mr Beast is doing and they need youtubers, and Karl suggested me, and... he might be flying me out there?”

Dream blinked, then grinned. “Dude, that’s awesome.”

“Yeah, cool,” George added. “Don’t die in a plane crash though.”

“He won’t, planes are safer than cars,” Dream said automatically. “When are you going?”

“Uh.” Sapnap hesitated. “I - I’m not sure I’m going to. It’s next week and that’s kinda soon, so—”

“Yeah, but we don’t have anything planned, do we?” Dream thought back, flipping open his notes app and scrolling through his calendar. “Well, we were gonna film with one of the new plugins, but we can easily do that another time. You should go.”

“I guess?” Sapnap let out a nervous laugh. “I just - I don’t know, meeting him in person feels weird.”

“Do you want to?” George asked.

“Yeah, obviously. But it’ll be the first time we meet, he might be - I mean, what if he’s one of my

soulmates?"

George hummed. "Do you think he will be?"

"I don't know." Sapnap's voice was small.

"Whether he is or he isn't, he's clearly a cool guy," Dream said, not liking how unsure Sapnap sounded. "He's not gonna change the way he is with you based on a thread. Karl's one of the nicest people we know, he's gonna be cool with whatever happens, and you'll be happier when you've met him and you know where you stand. Right?"

"Yeah, I guess." Sapnap heaved a sigh. "Would you cope without me though, Dream? It would only be for a week."

"Amazingly, I am capable of taking care of myself, yes."

"I'm not so sure about that," George said slyly. "Dream unsupervised gets dangerous."

Dream huffed. "If we were playing minecraft right now, I'd kill you for that."

"But you're not good enough at fortnite to stop me!" George crowed.

"To be honest, I'm not even completely convinced Dream will notice I'm gone," Sapnap added, amused. "I went to get takeout at lunch today and he didn't even realise I left the house."

Dream sat up straighter. "What? You went out?"

"Yeah."

"When did this happen?"

"See?" Sapnap cackled. "You were on the phone to George arguing about something. I did yell up to tell you I was leaving but I don't think you even heard me. I swear, George, you spend more time with Dream than I do, and I *live with him*."

Dream flushed, his face growing warm. He'd been on the phone with George from pretty much the moment he'd woken up until now - they'd been out of sync for a while, George's sleeping pattern not lining up with his after his day at the water park, so whenever they were both online at the same time they tended to take the opportunity to spend as many hours together as they could.

Well, when George wasn't insisting on playing fortnite, anyway.

"I mean, I *am* Dream's favourite," George said, smug.

Sapnap groaned. "Why aren't *I* anyone's favourite?"

"You're my favourite, Sapnap," George said with a smile.

Dream made a betrayed noise, banging his fist against his desk. "No, not fair! You can't do that to me!"

George burst out laughing.

"I'm Patches' favourite too," Sapnap said. "She's on my bed right now, you know?"

Dream gasped. "She isn't."

“She is!”

“No, she wouldn’t!” Dream spun around in his desk chair, surprised to find his bed empty, devoid of the usual spot where Patches would curl up to sleep. “How dare you steal my cat from me.”

“She came on my stream yesterday, too,” Sapnap hummed, delighted. “She’s starting to love me.”

“I hope she’ll love me when I get there,” George said wistfully.

“She will,” Dream said without a hint of hesitation. “She’ll love you the most, I just know it.”

“It took this long for her to warm up to me,” Sapnap pointed out.

“Yeah, but she won’t take as long with George. She’ll know he’s a cat person.”

Sapnap grumbled. “You’re just biased against me.”

“Maybe we’ll both gang up on you,” George said lightly. “Me and Dream can win every argument that way.”

Dream grinned. “Sounds like a plan.”

“You are both the *worst*, ugh. Also, I’m going to bed, we lost the game.”

Dream gave his head a shake, focusing back on his computer screen to find that it was indeed open on the lobby - they’d all been murdered by the other players, presumably while they were too busy talking.

“Give me back Patches before you go,” Dream complained. “I can’t sleep without her next to me.”

“Haven’t you got George for that?”

Dream spluttered, not sure how he should respond to that until George let out a light laugh and said something that took Dream’s breath away.

“Well, yeah, but he can cuddle Patches and he can’t cuddle me. Not yet, anyway.”

Dream choked on air, internally dying.

“Fair point,” Sapnap said easily, as if Dream wasn’t currently drowning. “Well, tough luck for tonight, Dream, I’m catnapping her. Goodnight.” And just like that, he dropped out of the voice channel, leaving no room for argument.

Dream sat in shocked silence for a few seconds, trying to process what George just said. A joke, a joke, it was a joke, he reminded himself, chanting it over and over like a mantra until he had some semblance of control over his thoughts again.

“You really might not get her back,” George commented after a minute. “Sapnap seemed pretty set on keeping her to himself.”

“I know, he sucks.” Dream let out a nervous laugh, still floundering. “Are you really going to come and cuddle me to sleep?”

“Depends,” George said lightly, and Dream was relieved to hear him sound like his normal self, playful and teasing. “Do you hog all the blankets?”

“No, I’m a good person to share with, I promise.”

“Mm, are you.” George’s tone dipped slightly. “Tell me what makes you so good.”

Dream bit his lip. He spun on his desk chair to face his bed, his pulse thudding loud in his ears. He could feel the ground thinning under his feet, but the sensation was exhilarating rather than anxiety inducing and he wanted to chase it a little more, as long as he was allowed. He lifted his phone and took a picture of his empty bed, focusing on the indent where Patches normally slept, and sent it to George through snapchat. “Well, first of all, there’s plenty of space. Look.”

He heard George’s notification go off, followed by a short silence. Then George hummed. “Alright, I’m interested. Keep talking.”

“People say I’m warm. That makes me good to hug.”

“Are you going to be my personal space heater?” George asked, amused. “Isn’t it super hot in Florida anyway?”

“Yeah, but no one wants a *cold* bed, George.”

“True.” George went quiet for a moment, and Dream grew antsy, wondering if he’d accidentally overstepped and made George uncomfortable.

Then his phone lit up with a snapchat notification.

“This is what you’ve got to improve on,” George said while Dream waited for the image to load. “Sell it to me, go on.”

A picture of George’s bedroom popped up, his double bed pushed against one wall in his crappy London flat that was never meant to be a permanent home. The walls were off-white, the carpet threadbare, but his (single) blanket looked cosy.

Dream could do one better, though.

“Okay.” Dream stalled for time while he went to his closet, reaching up to the top shelf to tug down his pile of spare blankets. “Not bad, but your blanket game is shocking, George, how do you only have *one*? ”

“Hey, if I bought more, that’s just more packing I’ll have to bring to Florida.”

“True.” Dream bit back a grin, tossing his pile of blankets onto his bed and starting to arrange them into something of a nest. “I’ll buy you as many as you want when you get here.”

“Simp.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Dream stepped back when he was satisfied with the blanket arrangement, taking a photo and sending it straight away. “This is much more appealing, right?”

George chuckled just as Dream watched the image change to *read*. “Yeah, okay, that does look comfy. Will I be on my own in there?”

Dream’s heart was in his mouth as he answered. “Do you want to be?”

Silence hung between them. Dream held his breath, his whole body strung tight with anticipation. He couldn’t quite believe this conversation was real - they joked around like this a lot, yes, but something in George’s voice this time sounded so at ease that Dream was struggling to remind

himself this wasn't supposed to be serious.

"Show me what you'd do," George said eventually, his voice low. "If you were gonna hold me."

Dream's breath caught. He stayed frozen for half-a-second before deciding he wasn't going to miss an opportunity like this and climbed into the pile of blankets, laying down on his side.

"You should know that I'm really great at giving hugs," Dream said, giving himself time to think through the best way to do this. He still wasn't going to show George his face, so he rolled himself into the blanket pile and held his phone out in front of him, pointing it at his torso. "Sapnap says I'm the best person to cling to when we're watching horror movies."

George snorted. "Sapnap isn't scared of horror."

"He says he isn't, but you should have heard him yelling the last time we put one on." Dream took the picture and studied it before pressing send - his shoulders and chest were visible, one arm wrapped around a blanket as if he was hugging it to his chest, his hand hidden behind the blanket so George couldn't see where his threads would be. The top of the photo cut off just above the hem of his hoody, right at the jut of his collarbones.

He sent the photo.

As he watched George open the image, a brief thought flitted through Dream's mind that maybe he should be questioning why he was sending his best friend pictures of himself in bed. Before he could really start wondering about that, the notification that George had taken a screenshot lit up in their chat.

Dream paused. He grinned. "You little sneak."

"It's blackmail," George said quickly - almost defensively. "And to remind you that you promised to cuddle me when I get there, so you can't try and kick me out when I set up camp in your bed."

Dream huffed out a weak laugh. His chest ached with the strength of his yearning. "Trust me, I'm not going to be kicking you out."

"You say that now, but you might not mean it in the morning."

Dream frowned, rolling onto his back and propping his phone up on his chest. The blankets tangled around him, soft and cosy, the night taking on a surreal quality that made Dream's tongue loose and his emotions raw. "I always mean what I say to you, George."

George went quiet, just his steady breathing echoing across the miles between them. Dream closed his eyes and allowed himself to really imagine George there with him - small frame pressed against Dream's side, tucked under his arm, his head laid on his chest. If he really concentrated, he could almost feel the soft strands of George's hair tickling his neck.

His phone vibrating against his chest disturbed him.

Dream blinked his eyes open, glancing down to see a new snapchat notification. He opened it to find a selfie from George, also lying in bed, curled on his side with his one blanket wrapped around his shoulders like a cape.

He was wearing Dream's hoody.

Dream sucked in an involuntary breath.

"I really hope you don't kick me out," George said, voice soft but uncertain. "I'm all elbows and knees, I'll probably end up kicking you in the ribs or something."

Dream let out a light chuckle, his gaze fixed on his phone screen. The photo of George was more intimate than what he usually received - they didn't often send each other still pictures, more often than not just hopping on video call if Dream wanted to see George and George wanted to look at Dream's surroundings. The only still photos Dream had of George were ones he'd saved from the internet and hidden away in a secret folder buried on his desktop that he hoped George would never find out about.

Dream hesitated, then took a screenshot.

George's laughter spilled through his headphones. "Now who's the sneak?"

"Like you said, blackmail."

"Uh huh, sure." George was smiling - Dream could hear it in his voice, his chest aching with the need to witness it for himself.

"You're really beautiful, George," Dream murmured without thinking, still staring at the photo.

A small silence fell between them. Dream bit down on his inner cheek, but didn't take it back - he meant it, and he'd complimented George before, so it wasn't like this was new territory. Something about seeing George's skinny frame drowning in Dream's merch made him lose what little filter he had left.

He expected the usual deflection from George in response - a laugh, or a disgruntled *what does that even mean*, but instead George said quietly, "You look like you would be, too."

Dream's heart jolted to a sudden stop. "What?"

"I mean - your face is only part of it." George sounded tired, but not so sleepy that Dream was worried about him saying something he'd regret - which in a way made this worse because now Dream dared to hope that George actually meant what he was saying. "Your arms look comfy. You look comfy."

Dream's mouth ran dry. He had no idea what to say in response.

"Sapnap told me you gave him the best hug when he got there," George continued, unusually sincere. "I've been thinking about it ever since."

"You have?" Dream sounded strangled even to his own ears.

"Yeah. I think I'd like to know how it feels for real."

"You will," Dream promised him fiercely. "You'll get your visa and you'll come here and I'll hug you so tight you won't be able to get away."

"Mm, I bet you're clingy. You seem like you would be."

"Yeah," Dream confessed, not bothering to deny it. "I like the idea of being able to touch you whenever I want."

"I'm quite clingy too," George said, much to Dream's surprise. "Not - not like, in a weird way, but I like the idea of being able to come into your room and watch you edit whenever I want."

Dream swallowed. He could picture it so perfectly - sitting at his desk working while George sprawled out on his bed, playing with Patches or scrolling tik tok on his phone. Being able to turn his head and remind himself that George was just *there* seemed too good to be true.

Dream smiled, unbidden. "Yeah, Sapnap and I are prepared for you to just wander in and out of our rooms whenever you like."

"Sounds about right."

Dream wheezed out a laugh. His heart felt full.

"Will you hug me at the airport, then?" George asked, then corrected himself. "Or actually, you won't be able to come to the airport in case we get spotted - when we're at home, then. You'll hug me as soon as you see me?"

Dream closed his eyes, overwhelmed by the amount of care George showed him - knowing that Dream wouldn't be comfortable leaving the house, how he so naturally referred to their house as *home* even though it was a place George had never been to before.

"Yeah," Dream said, beaming. "Of course I'll hug you as soon as I see you, how could I not?"

"Good." George sighed. "I want to get it out of the way, so I can know where our thread's gonna go."

Just like that, Dream's mood dimmed. He stared down at his hands, at the red thread lying still against his ring finger, and his chest constricted. He tried to imagine a new yellow thread for George tying itself to one of his fingers, and his stomach soured with disappointment.

He shouldn't be disappointed to have George in his life forever. Dream would take him in whatever way he was permitted, but...

But his heart ached all the same.

"I hate the threads sometimes," George said after a moment of quiet.

Dream hummed, surprised. "You do?"

"Yeah. I know it's—" George sighed, sounding almost frustrated. "It's meant to be nice, right? To know who your people are. But sometimes I feel like the threads cause way more problems than they're worth."

Dream stared at the red thread on his left hand and wheezed out a laugh. "Yeah, I actually don't think you're wrong."

"You don't?"

"Mm."

"I thought you'd be one of those people that's obsessed with them," George said, tone light but underpinned with something serious. "You strike me as the kind of romantic who'd want to find your people as quickly as possible and keep them close to you forever."

"Well, yeah," Dream agreed, spreading both his hands out across his blanket and studying his threads. "I do want that, but I also like the idea of getting to choose who stays in my life, you know?"

“You do?”

“Yeah. Like you, George - I know that no matter what, you’re going to be a very important person in my life forever, and whatever happens with the threads when we meet that’s not going to change.” Dream swallowed, staring his red thread down like it was challenging him. “I won’t let anything get in the way of that.”

George was quiet for a while. When he next spoke, he sounded uncertain again. “You really mean that, don’t you?”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

“Nothing, I just—” George sighed. “Sometimes I wish I could see your threads.”

Dream smiled, endeared. “I’ve told you who I have already.”

“I know, but seeing it would be nice. You never show me your hands.”

Dream swallowed, still staring down his red thread. For the first time, he was glad that he and George had yet to meet in person, because if he ever slipped up and accidentally showed his hands in a photo then George still wouldn’t be able to see his thread. Not until they knew if they were soulmates.

An idea came to him.

“Do you really want to see?” Dream asked, laying his left hand beneath the pile of blankets so just the tips of his fingers were visible and opening up his camera.

George laughed. “I mean, yeah, but I won’t be able to see your threads until we’ve touched.”

“I know.” Dream took a photo, then tapped on the edit button, selecting the digital marker. “But that doesn’t mean I can’t show you.”

“That is literally exactly what it means, Dream.”

“You have no faith,” Dream accused, laughing. He drew around the outline of his hand under the blanket in the photo, then focused on his middle finger, marking in the yellow thread where he was connected with Sapnap. Then he sent the picture. “There. That’s Nick’s thread.”

He heard a quiet inhale through his headphones. Dream smiled, tapping out a rhythm on his mattress and watching his threads dance, yellow and red moving in sync.

“Is that what it looks like?” George asked.

“It’s where Sapnap’s thread is on my hand, yeah.”

Silence held for another minute, then George let out a quiet sigh. “It’s brighter than I thought it would be. When I met Wilbur and Tommy, I was kinda surprised by how intense the threads are - I can really *feel* them against my fingers, you know? And when they hugged me something just *clicked*.”

Dream hummed. The flare of jealousy was easier to combat this time, with George’s visa application sent in and a plan for a permanent future taking shape between them. “Yeah, I felt the same with Nick - though of course it’s like that with my mom and sister too. Your family must have felt it too, right? When you met Wilbur and Tommy, I mean - my sister is always laughing at

me for how strong my thread is with Nick.”

George let out a neutral hum and changed the subject. “Do you think Sapnap’s going to get a thread with Karl if he does go to see him next week?”

Curiosity itched at Dream - the same curiosity that always built in him when George avoided conversations about soulmate threads. He didn’t push, though, not when the night was growing dark and George’s voice was starting to take on notes of dangerous sleepiness. “Yeah, I wouldn’t be surprised if he did. Karl’s cool, it’ll be nice if he does.”

“Do you ever wonder about meeting up with the others?” George asked. “I mean, there’s loads of our friends quite close to you. You could be threaded to some of them, aren’t you curious?”

Dream considered the question for a second. “I guess? I mean, one day I’d like to hang out with them, but I can’t really go anywhere properly until I face reveal, and I’m not doing that until you get here.”

“You’re really waiting for me, aren’t you?”

“Well, yeah? You, me, and Sapnap are meant to start our lives together, George. That’s always been the plan.”

The smile was audible in George’s tone. “Yeah. My visa needs to hurry up and get approved.”

“It’s been two days.”

“Exactly, it needs to *hurry up*. I’m tired of waiting, why can’t they just see that I’m not a criminal and let me in already?”

Dream chuckled, amused that George could procrastinate on something for weeks at a time but then, the second he’d done his part, demand impatiently that the rest of the world fall into place for him immediately. “It’s gonna happen soon. I can feel it.”

“I hope so. I miss you.”

Dream smiled. “I’m right here, George.”

“Yeah, but it’s not the same.” A faint rustle on the end of the line told Dream that George was moving - sitting up in bed, it sounded like, though he was still in his bedroom because the slight echo from his hallway wasn’t audible. “You’re so far away.”

“I know. It hurts me that the universe dared to allow you to be born on a different continent than me.”

George laughed, the sound bright and achingly familiar. Dream let himself drown in it, just for a moment, losing himself to the strange intensity of the night.

His phone vibrated with another snapchat notification.

“This is to tide you over until I get there,” George said lightly.

“You’re spoiling me with George content,” Dream joked while he waited for the image to load, his heart fluttering beneath his ribs. The photo he was met with took his breath away - George smiling at the camera so hard his eyes scrunched up small, his high cheekbones and wide grin doing something funny to Dream’s insides. He was still wearing Dream’s hoody, the sleeves covering his

visible hand entirely while his other held the phone out in front of him. In the background, Dream could see his bed and desk, the window showing the faint hint of dawn through a crack in the blinds. Miles away in England, the sun was starting to rise.

“Oh, George,” Dream breathed, and found he had nothing else to say.

Another faint rustle that sounded like George falling back onto his mattress. “Your bed looks a lot comfier than mine.”

“Come find out,” Dream challenged without thinking, warm to the very tips of his toes. “I have space.”

George laughed quietly. “I haven’t even seen your face and you’re inviting me into bed with you.”

“You started it,” Dream accused, opening up his camera. He zoomed in super close on his face, focusing on his left eye, and snapped a photo. “You wanted me to show you how I’d hold you if you were here, George, if anything *you’re* the one being inappropriate tonight.”

George spluttered. “You’re the one that sent the picture!”

“You wanted me to!”

“And you just do everything I ask you, do you?” George paused, then snorted. “Actually, yeah, you do, I don’t even know why I had to say that like it isn’t true.”

“Shut up.” Dream checked the picture over to make sure he wasn’t revealing too much - all it really showed was an extreme close-up of his eye, his green iris visible beneath his hooded eyelid, and just the corner of his eyebrow cropped at the top of the frame. He sent it without a caption. “There you go, now you’ll recognise me.”

George sucked in a sharp breath just as Dream heard the faint *ping* of his notification. “Dream. You didn’t—?”

“It’s not my whole face,” Dream said quickly, not wanting to tease George about this. “Open it.”

George did so, and then he let out a loud laugh. “God, I *hate* you.”

“You don’t! Take that back right now.”

“For a second, you had me thinking—” George huffed out another laugh, disbelieving and hoarse. “Fuck, I thought I was finally going to see your face after this many years and you send me *one eye*?!”

“It’s a good eye though, right?” Dream asked, biting back a grin.

George heaved a sigh. “You’re impossible.”

“Tell me you like my eye.”

“Oh my God, you weirdo.” George sounded fond, his tone soft with sleep. “It’s a good eye. The same colour as the axolotl version of you.”

Dream hummed. “I mean, technically, my eyes are green, but it won’t really look like that to you, will it - it’ll be more yellow, I guess?”

“Yellow and green look pretty much the same.”

Dream thought back to the plugin they'd coded to give him and Sapnap an idea of the way George viewed the world, pleased he had a frame of reference to satisfy his neverending curiosity when it came to all things George. "Does it look the same colour as the yellow threads, too?"

"Kind of. Your eyes are brighter than the threads."

Dream smiled. "I guess it's a good thing you can tell the difference between red and yellow, isn't it?"

"I guess." George exhaled, almost forlorn. "Threads are so complicated."

Dream stared at the red thread wrapped around his ring finger and silently agreed.

"I'm gonna prop up the picture of your eye on my pillow while I go to sleep," George continued after a minute, his voice thick with tiredness.

Dream wheezed out a laugh. "You want me to watch you while you sleep?"

"That just makes it sound creepy," George grumbled. "But in a non-creepy way, yeah, I wouldn't mind that."

Dream froze.

"I just like knowing you're here," George continued, definitely too tired to be having this conversation. "Helps me feel settled."

Dream's heart thumped in his chest. He basked in the warmth that spread through him, content in the knowledge that his presence helped George relax, and wrapped himself up in his blankets with his phone right next to him on his pillow. "Go to sleep, George. I'll keep talking to you until you're dreaming."

Sapnap left for Karl's four days later.

Dream felt slightly like a mother hen, clucking around making sure Sapnap packed enough clothes ("We're hardly gonna be going out anywhere, we're in a literal pandemic, Dream." "Yes, but you'll be *streaming*. You'll thank me for it later when you have more than two outfits to choose from.") and had a plan for when he arrived at the airport.

"Karl's coming to pick me up," Sapnap said, fiddling with his cap while he waited for the taxi to arrive. "We're not gonna touch until we get back to his place though, just - just in case."

Dream leaned back against the wall in the entrance hall and nodded. "Makes sense. If you're soulmates then you won't want an audience."

"Don't even joke about it," Sapnap warned, holding up a hand. He was uncharacteristically nervous, shuffling his feet and adjusting his cap several times over, making sure his mask covered most of his face.

Dream clapped him on the shoulder, reassuring. "You're gonna be fine, Nick. Karl's great."

"I know."

"And if he turns out to be a secret serial killer or something, call me and I'll come get you out of there."

Sapnap broke into a smile, though it didn't quite reach his eyes. "You're gonna be my protector, huh?"

"You bet I am."

Sapnap let out a nervous laugh when his phone dinged in his hands. He glanced down and swallowed, anxiety sweeping off him in waves. "Taxi's outside. I should go."

"Want help with your bags?"

"Nah, I'm fine." Sapnap squared his shoulders, picking up his suitcase and slinging his backpack over one shoulder. He met Dream's eyes. "Say goodbye to Patches for me."

"I will." Dream pulled him into a quick hug, smiling when Sapnap relaxed into his chest for a second too long, betraying his nerves. "You're gonna be absolutely fine. Let me know when you get there safely."

"Yes, mom." Sapnap rolled his eyes, pulling back. "Don't burn the house down while I'm gone."

Dream just snorted in response.

He stood on the doorway with a face mask covering his nose and mouth in case any stray passersby happened to recognise him - unlikely, he knew, but years of hiding his face had made Dream paranoid - and waved until Sapnap got in the taxi and disappeared down the street in the direction of the airport.

Then he walked back into his empty house and stood in the entrance to the living room, at a loose end for the first time in a while.

George wasn't up yet - he'd been on Quackity's stream into the early hours of the morning, yelling and bickering about something or other - and Patches was currently fast asleep on the couch in Dream's office. He had a video to edit and Callahan wanted to go over some issues on the server with him, but Dream felt a bit unfocused, the house too quiet, too still.

He wandered into the kitchen and called his mom for a while, then retreated upstairs to work until George finally came online and demanded his attention while he streamed fortnite. Dream lost himself in failing miserably at a game he still didn't completely understand while George and a hundred thousand other people laughed at him, and it was the most fun he'd had in a while.

The rest of the week passed in much the same way - Sapnap went suspiciously quiet, other than a text to confirm he'd safely arrived at Karl's and was indeed not getting axe murdered in his sleep. Dream spent the days wandering aimlessly from room to room, cuddling Patches, editing his video, and hanging out with George every available minute they were both awake.

He hadn't realised how used he'd become to having someone else in the house with him until Sapnap was gone.

"Aww, you miss him!" George teased, his voice pitching high in that way he had that should be annoying but Dream just found endearing instead.

"Yeah, I actually do," Dream confessed, standing in the kitchen making himself dinner with George propped open on a video call on the counter. Dream had his camera turned off, but he'd pestered George to turn his on because five days without seeing another human person was making him climb the walls.

“How did you ever live alone for so long?”

“I don’t even know. Whenever you’re not awake I just have Karl and Sapnap’s streams playing in the background to keep me going.”

“Simp,” George laughed. “I’m texting Sapnap right now to tell him that, oh my God, he’s gonna die.”

Dream just rolled his eyes. “Have you heard from him much?”

“Not at all since he left yours. You?”

“Not since he arrived at Karl’s.” Dream chewed on his inner cheek while he waited for the sauce to thicken, trying not to worry. Sapnap was usually very communicative, bothering both George and Dream with constant messages and facetime calls even when they were around each other almost all hours of the day. This radio silence was new.

“He’s probably just busy with Karl,” George said. “Don’t overthink it.”

Dream heaved a sigh. “I know, I just worry.”

“I know you do, but you need to get out of your head. I’m convinced he’s just lost himself in obsessing over Karl in person instead of having to spend hours and hours on call with him every day instead.”

Dream bit back a smile. He had an idea of what that might feel like - when George was finally in Florida with him, he suspected he might ignore the rest of the world for as long as it took to adjust to George being a real person standing right in front of him.

Maybe he could forgive Sapnap’s silence.

“Besides, he looks fine in the streams,” George added, noisily chewing on his instant noodles. He waved a hand at the camera, drowning in a beige sweater that was definitely two sizes too big for him. “Trust me, they’re just too busy hanging out to care about us.”

Dream hummed, stirring the sauce absent-mindedly. Sapnap did look like he was having fun when he streamed with Karl, though Dream had to do a double-take the first time he saw them sitting together on camera, occupying the same space. Karl had the biggest smile on his face whenever he looked at Sapnap, and Sapnap seemed relaxed around him, which was the main thing. They both wore gloves whenever they were on camera, so even though Dream was soulmates with Sapnap, he had no idea if Sapnap was threaded to Karl or not.

He was curious, but he knew he should wait and let Sapnap tell him in his own time.

As it turned out, that time didn’t occur until Sapnap returned to Florida. He finally got back in touch at the end of the week to let Dream know what time his flight was due to arrive, and Dream set about arranging a taxi for him and ordering pizza from their favourite place so that Sapnap could eat something that wasn’t just shitty plane food.

George stayed on call with him most of the day, until it got too late and he was slurring his words so badly that Dream sent him to bed with orders to sleep right through until morning. Dream settled himself on the couch while he waited for the pizza to arrive, Patches curled up in his lap while some drama played in the background.

The pizza arrived two minutes before Sapnap did. Dream was just setting the boxes out on the

coffee table when he heard a set of keys turn in the lock and Sapnap stumbled into the hall, looking exhausted.

“Nick!” Dream cheered as soon as he caught sight of him, dropping everything to scurry out into the hall. “You’ve returned, *finally*, never leave me alone for this long again.”

Much to Dream’s amazement, Sapnap didn’t reply. He kicked his shoes off and dropped his bags right where he was standing, then turned to face Dream with something almost wild around his eyes.

Dream stopped short. “What’s wrong?”

Wordlessly, Sapnap pulled off the glove on his left hand and held his fingers up for Dream to see. Dream frowned at him, confused, until he caught sight of the brand new thread tied tight to Sapnap’s ring finger - knotted with finality in a beautiful, deep red.

Dream’s mouth dropped open in shock.

“Yeah,” Sapnap muttered, clenching his hand into a fist and dropping it down by his side. “That’s about how I reacted, too.”

Dream stared at him, trying to process what he was seeing. The red thread tied around Sapnap’s ring finger stopped just a few inches past his hand, dangling in midair, which meant that Dream either wasn’t soulmates with whoever was on the other end of it, or he just hadn’t met them yet.

Sapnap had spent the whole week with one person, which meant—

“Karl?” Dream asked, stumbling back a step when Sapnap pushed past him into the living room. “*Karl’s* your romantic soulmate?”

Sapnap groaned. He flopped down face-first onto their longest couch, burying his face in the cushion and refusing to surface.

Dream followed after him, hovering at his feet. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“No,” Sapnap mumbled. He rolled onto his back, peering up at Dream with scrunched eyebrows and a complicated expression. “Yes. I don’t know?”

“That’s okay.” Dream nudged his feet out of the way and sat down. “You can be confused about it with me.”

Sapnap let out a deep sigh and closed his eyes. Dream patted his knee reassuringly, staring at his left hand and trying to wrap his head around the new thread he could see sitting proudly around Sapnap’s ring finger. Right next to where Dream’s yellow thread was, in the same place as Dream had his own red thread.

A quiet *mrow* from the corner of the room announced Patches’ arrival. Dream bent down and scooped her up into his arms, giving her ear a scratch before he placed her firmly on Sapnap’s stomach. “There, sweetheart, you’ve got a mission. Cheer up Nick.”

Patches settled happily enough, starting to lick her paw and clean her face. Sapnap opened one eye and petted her back. “You’ll love me no matter what, won’t you, Patches?”

Predictably, she ignored him.

“We’ve got your back,” Dream answered for her. “Are you sure you don’t wanna talk about this? I’m here if you do, buddy.”

Sapnap was silent for a long few minutes, concentrating on threading his fingers through Patches’ fur and completely avoiding Dream’s eyes. Dream gave him time - he knew what Sapnap was like over the years they’d grown up together on voice call. He’d been there on the other end of the line through Sapnap’s first awkward encounters with past girlfriends, through his high school crushes and the struggles with his family, and Dream knew what he needed to feel comfortable enough to open up.

Finally, Sapnap exhaled and tipped his head back against the armrest. “My romantic soulmate is a fucking dude.”

Despite himself, Dream’s lips twitched up. “Is that a surprise?”

“Kinda?” Sapnap squinted at the ceiling. “No, not really. But a bit, yeah. I’m not surprised it’s *Karl*, just...”

“Did you think this was gonna happen when you met him?”

“I had a suspicion,” Sapnap admitted quietly. “A very vague suspicion that I thought was mostly ridiculous, but - then he was just *there*, at the airport with his stupid laugh and the best hug in the world and I just... knew.”

Dream’s chest warmed. He sank into the couch cushions with a fond sigh. “Ah, young love.”

Sapnap kicked him in the knee.

“Ouch.” Dream rubbed his leg with a grimace. “You didn’t touch in the airport though, right?”

Sapnap cleared his throat. “Uh. We did, actually.”

“*What?*”

“I know it was a bad idea, but he was *right there* and I just—” Sapnap’s face twisted into an uncomfortable expression. “I just, uh, ran into his arms, sorta?”

Dream snorted. “How do you *sort of* run into someone’s arms?”

“I don’t know, dude, but I did.”

Dream grinned, able to picture it perfectly - a nervous Sapnap completely losing his head and forgetting he was in public in broad daylight. “What happened?”

“He caught me, and we hugged, and this fucking thing appeared on my finger.” Sapnap wiggled his left hand, red and yellow threads dancing in tandem. “And we both completely freaked out.”

“Karl freaked out, too?”

“Yeah. There was a lot of screeching.” Sapnap took a deep breath. “He was - excited, though. He told me he’d been hoping this would happen.”

Dream resisted the urge to coo. “What did you say?”

“That I was completely terrified.”

Dream squeezed Sapnap's ankle where it lay hooked across his lap. "Karl didn't treat you badly, right? Because I *will* go and have words with him if I need to."

Sapnap sent him a horrified expression, his hand stilling in Patches' fur. "Oh God. Don't you *dare*."

"What?"

"I am *not* sending my giant six-foot friend after my new soulmate - no, that's *not* happening, Jesus Christ."

Dream laughed, stretching his legs out across the rug. "Alright, fair enough. Tell me what happened."

Sapnap sighed, closing his eyes again. He rubbed his forehead with two fingers. "I don't know. Not much, actually? We - talked, a lot, over the next few days. Just got used to being around each other. Did you know Karl is like, really warm? *Really* warm, and he smells nice."

Dream grinned. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. He's always burning that incense, I like it."

"We can get some, if you want."

"Yeah, maybe." Sapnap bit his lower lip, staring up at the ceiling and steadfastly avoiding Dream's gaze. Dream gave him time, the silence between them broken only by Patches' steady purring.

"I had to tell him some shit," Sapnap said finally, swallowing. "Shit I don't like talking about. Not even to you."

Dream paused. "Your mom?"

Sapnap nodded.

"Oh." Dream patted Sapnap's knee, sympathy coursing through him. He only knew about Sapnap's family troubles because he'd been there while a lot of it took place, during Sapnap's childhood and teen years while he navigated difficult family circumstances that Dream didn't think any child should have to deal with. No wonder Sapnap didn't like talking about it.

"I never really wanted a red thread," Sapnap said suddenly. "I saw what it did to my mom and dad - how they both only had yellow threads for so long that they just - gave up. But they got together and had me anyway, and - well, you know how that turned out."

"Yeah," Dream said quietly. The divorce had been messy, and Sapnap was caught right in the middle from a very young age. It didn't help that Sapnap himself had a yellow thread with his dad, but not his mom, alienating her further. She'd turned on him quite a bit when he was younger, blaming him for her relationships falling apart even though Sapnap never did anything to even remotely deserve it.

"My mom only ever had one yellow thread," Sapnap continued quietly. "With her mom. And when my dad met my stepmom and they both got a red thread out of nowhere - *and* then I got a yellow thread with my stepmom too - everything turned into a giant mess. I kinda vowed to myself then and there that I'd never let myself get so tangled up in thread stuff again."

"Makes sense," Dream said carefully, squeezing Sapnap's knee. "But you know, just because that

happened to your parents doesn't mean it's gonna happen to you, too."

"I know." Sapnap focused on scratching behind Patches' ear. "But threads are *so* messy, red threads especially - though I guess I don't need to tell you that, huh."

Dream stared down at the red thread on his own left hand and let out a harsh laugh.

"So when I started getting these *feelings* when I was talking to Karl..." Sapnap broke off, shaking his head. "I dunno, I kept hoping they weren't real. I just thought to myself, it's fine, because I'm gonna be like my mom and only have yellow threads, and I'll be perfectly okay with that. It's not like I *need* a romantic relationship to be happy."

"True," Dream said, cautious. "But - I mean, if you do want one, that's not a bad thing either."

Sapnap went quiet again, studying his fingers in Patches' fur.

"What did Karl say?" Dream asked, pushing a little bit because he knew Sapnap sometimes needed outside reassurance when he was struggling with his emotions, but he didn't always find it easy to ask for help. Dream liked to remind him that he had someone in his corner no matter what.

A small smile tugged at the corner of Sapnap's mouth. "Great, as usual. He's really - I don't know how to say it, he's just *comfort*. Comfort in a person. You know?"

Dream thought of George saying something similar about him in the past and smiled. "I know."

"He said we don't have to jump right into anything, it's just - it's all about what we want. We can take it as slow as we need to, but also, he's here for me if I want or need him."

"And do you want him?"

"Fuck yeah," Sapnap said without hesitation. He swallowed, meeting Dream's gaze for the first time in a while, and the sheer anxiety Dream could see tucked behind his gaze made Dream's heart tug. "I really - fuck, I *really* like him, Clay."

Dream broke into a warm smile. "That's a good thing. It might not feel like it right now, but it could be a *really* good thing, you know?"

"Yeah." Sapnap closed his eyes. "There's still loads for us to sort out. Karl's ace as well, do you remember? He's posted about it online before."

Dream nodded, remembering the few conversations he'd had with Karl over the last few months - mostly regarding labels and why they weren't always super necessary, in their opinion at least. Karl being somewhere on the asexual spectrum wasn't a surprise.

"It's not a *problem*, like I don't care whatever he is, but I—" Sapnap chewed on his lower lip, clearly thinking through his words. "I don't want to mess anything up? And I don't know *shit* about this, I thought I was a straight dude until literally seven days ago."

"Well, you know my opinion on labels," Dream said with a wry smile. "They can be useful, sure, but I like just being an unidentifiable blob. I'm not straight, but I don't feel the need to call myself something specific. I just like who I like."

Sapnap peered up at him curiously, considering him. "How did you end up so okay with all of this?"

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you’re—” Sapnap flapped a hand at him in a vague gesture. “You’ve said for a while that you’re not straight, right? How did you know?”

Dream paused. He stared down at the red thread on his hand, hesitating over his answer, because while he knew exactly when and why he’d started to question his own sexuality, he didn’t really know how he felt about sharing that information with Sapnap. This was a piece of himself he’d always kept close to his chest.

But Sapnap knew more than Dream gave him credit for.

“I mean - I’m guessing it’s got something to do with George, right?” Sapnap asked carefully.

Dream swallowed, panic climbing up his throat. Was he really that obvious?

“When did you know that you want it to be him on the other end of your red thread?” Sapnap pressed after a minute. “I just poured out my heart to you, dude, help me out here.”

Dream forced himself to breathe out, to relax the tense knot of his fingers in his lap. He turned to meet Sapnap’s eyes, daring to let himself open up, for all the feelings he’d been carrying locked up away in a compartment he didn’t dare touch to finally spill out of him. “George is just... George. Things have always been different with him.”

Sapnap tilted his head. “Always?”

“I think so? I just didn’t know what it meant when I was younger.” Dream shook his head, fighting back a dry laugh. “Like, when I first started trying to contact him, I thought his coding was awesome and I could hardly believe he was studying *computers* at *college*, like that just seemed so cool to me. I really wanted to impress him, like a lot.”

“Yeah, I remember that. You used to spam our chat whenever he’d reply to you.”

“Yeah.” Dream let out a light laugh, remembering how enthusiastic his younger self had been, how determined he was to get George’s approval. “But then when we started talking properly, and I really got to know him, he was always just - I don’t know, different.”

“You’ve known for that long, then?” Sapnap asked, sounding surprised.

Dream made a face. “No, not really. I still don’t even know for sure.”

Sapnap arched a brow.

“Well, okay, maybe I do know,” Dream corrected, grimacing. “But I - it wasn’t like some grand moment when everything suddenly made sense. It’s just, over time, I’ve realised how George is the first person I talk to in the morning and the last person I hang out with at night. When I picture my future, he’s always in it. You are too, don’t get me wrong, but George is like - a permanent fixture. And when I picture him here, finally in front of me, I want to...”

Dream trailed off, biting his lip. He really wasn’t sure he should be sharing this with Sapnap.

“I don’t think I want you to finish that sentence,” Sapnap said, amused. “Going by the look on your face.”

Dream shoved him, feeling hot. “You asked!”

“Yeah, and you were no help at all.” Sapnap returned to staring at the ceiling, lost in his personal crisis while Dream drowned in the strength of his own feelings. At least Sapnap knew who his red thread belonged to. Dream was having feelings for someone who couldn’t possibly be his - or at least, not in the way he craved.

“Threads are a mess,” Sapnap announced with such a note of finality that it brooked no argument.

“Yeah,” Dream agreed, staring hollowly at his own red thread. “Yeah, I’m with you on that one.”

Over the next few days, Sapnap took to moping around the house, mostly sticking to his own room and only surfacing for food and the occasional reassuring hug from Dream. Dream gave them over gladly, wanting to support Sapnap however he could, even though this was brand new territory for the both of them.

Sometimes, Dream would pad past Sapnap’s room and hear him on the phone, his tone serious and gentle in a way that Dream had come to recognise as his Karl voice. Dream always made sure to leave him alone then, disappearing out of earshot as quickly as he could.

George had no idea what was going on, and he hated it.

“At least give me a clue,” he badgered Dream on the third night after Sapnap returned while Dream sat in his office, busy editing a video. He was sharing his screen, ostensibly to ask for George’s opinions on his music choices, but mostly just because he wanted George to be there with him every step of the day.

Pathetic, really.

“I really can’t, George, it’s not my secret to tell.” Dream focused on the clip he was currently dragging down to size, cutting out several minutes of George whining at him that didn’t really need to go in the finished video. Dream made sure to save the clip for himself, though.

George sighed. “He’s okay though, right?”

“He’s fine, I promise. I’m sorry I can’t tell you what this is about.”

“I get it,” George said easily, blunt as ever. “It annoys me that you and him are right there together and I’m not, but I also get that he’ll tell me when he’s ready.”

“Good.”

“I reserve the right to whine at you about how unfair this all this, though.”

Dream snorted. “Point taken.”

George hummed, satisfied, and Dream focused on his editing as much as he could, trying to shut off the whirring part of his brain that always descended into overthinking.

He’d been doing a lot of that lately. Ever since Sapnap started this crisis over his red thread, Dream had been thinking more and more about his own predicament - mostly, how absolutely, atrociously *unfair* he was being to whoever actually was on the other end of his red thread. He was so caught up in George that he hadn’t even tried to find them recently - he’d stopped checking the forums, stopped trying new avenues to figure out who else might have been there that day in the natural history museum in New York.

His mom still got all the alerts, Dream knew, but he hadn't even asked her about them lately. He'd been too busy drowning in his feelings for George.

George, who had never been to New York. George, who couldn't *possibly* be the person on the other end of his thread.

Dream was a terrible person.

"I don't know that I'd put that exact clip in." George's voice interrupted Dream's spiralling thoughts. "You make a dumb mistake with your inventory."

"Huh?" Dream glanced at the screen where the video was still playing, focusing on the section George was talking about. He huffed out a small laugh when he saw what George meant. "Oh, yeah, my water bucket wasn't where I thought it would be and it took me forever to figure it out."

"You were being slow," George teased. "I was *so close* to killing you."

"I still can't believe you cheated," Dream accused. He was editing footage they'd filmed last week when Sapnap was away, another Death Shuffle where George tracked down Dream's own traps and glitches to stop himself from losing.

"Years of manhunts have trained me how to stalk you," George crowed. "I'm like a sniffer dog, I can hunt you *down*."

"You're ridiculous."

"Well, you've gotta give everyone else some sort of advantage or you're just going to win everything all the time."

Dream bit back a smile while he cut out the clip. Whenever George alluded to how good Dream was at minecraft, it always stroked Dream's ego more than it probably should, and Dream allowed himself to bask in it. "Are you saying I'm better than you?"

George scoffed. "You don't need me to tell you that."

"I do," Dream pressed, feeling cheeky. "Tell me how good I am."

"Oh god, don't do this again." George laughed, exasperated but fond - Dream could hear it in his tone, and his heart jumped in response. "You're so dramatic when you don't get what you want."

"Tell me, George."

"Why? You already *know* what I think."

"But I want to hear it," Dream insisted. "Tell me."

"What, do you have a praise kink or something?" George laughed at his own joke, easy and unfiltered like he was when it was just the two of them with no audience. "I bet you *do*, that would explain so much."

Heat crept up the back of Dream's neck. "Shut up."

"Awww, Dream, you want me to tell you what a good boy you are?"

A rush of warmth shot straight down to Dream's gut. He swallowed, clenching his fist around his mouse. "Shut *up*, I take it all back."

“Wow.” George’s tone softened, though still rife with amusement. “Interesting. I’ll remember this for when I get there in person.”

Dream squeezed his eyes shut, struggling to ground himself. A joke, he reminded himself, this was all a silly joke. George wasn’t the person on the other end of his red thread.

His stomach soured.

“And I was only kidding,” George continued after a minute, his tone light. “You’re really good, Dream. You did good.”

Dream bit down hard on his inner cheek - hard enough for sharp pain to sting between his teeth. The warmth that flooded through him as soon as George said those words made his head floaty, and while the feeling was pleasant it also scared him.

George shouldn’t be the person making him feel like this.

“Uh.” Dream cleared his throat, wondering how he was supposed to recover from this. “Thanks?”

George’s light laughter settled some of the anxiety coursing through him. “I bet you’re blushing.”

Dream made a muffled noise of complaint.

“You are, aren’t you? *God*, I can’t wait until I’m there to see it in person.”

“This is unfair.” Dream attempted to defend himself, more flustered than he’d like to admit. His back-and-forth with George was always enjoyable, but Dream was usually the one pushing boundaries, making George retreat into a spluttering mess. Whenever it happened the other way around, it always caught Dream off guard.

“What’s unfair is that you and Sapnap are together and I’m not,” George said, heaving a dramatic sigh. “I wanna see you blush in person too.”

Dream huffed out a quiet laugh. He was relieved they could joke about George’s jealousy now - not because it wasn’t important, but because they were taking steps to solve it. George’s visa application was still pending, but they’d sent in all the required evidence and they were just waiting for confirmation that he’d been approved. Dream was still very hopeful they’d have George here in Florida in time for Christmas.

“Soon,” Dream promised, returning to editing his video. “But I don’t blush, so you’re gonna be disappointed.”

George scoffed. “I don’t believe that for a second.”

“You’re the one who turns red easily, not me.”

“I bet you *do*,” George argued. “I bet I could make you.”

Dream didn’t want to think about how accurate that was.

He stayed on call with George until the video was edited and George had to go meet his dad, and once they’d hung up Dream stared mindlessly at his screen while he waited for youtube’s upload system to work its magic. He tapped his fingers restlessly against his desk, watching his threads dance with the movement.

His red thread stood out starkly, lying dormant around his ring finger.

Guilt climbed up his throat, souring his stomach and wrapping cold fingers around his heart. He didn't know *why* he was so caught up on George, unable to think about feeling close to someone who wasn't him, even if that someone was on the other end of Dream's red thread. He couldn't bear to think about what would happen if he finally met George and a yellow thread knotted itself between them. That might even be worse than if no thread appeared at all.

Dream squeezed his eyes shut and dug his fingers into his hair, scratching at his scalp. He needed to talk to someone, to sort through the mess of thoughts crowding his too-full head, but Sapnap was on the phone with Karl and his mom was out with his sister at the mall. No one else knew - or at least, not anyone that Dream felt comfortable opening up to.

The one person he usually called when he couldn't sort through his emotions was Bad, but Dream had never told him about his red thread. Still, Bad never judged him, and he was the most level-headed out of their friends. Perhaps he could help.

Even if it meant telling him about Dream's threads.

Dream sighed, opening his eyes again. His video was still uploading and would be for a while - he had time to kill. Before he could talk himself out of it, Dream opened discord and clicked on his private messages with Bad, asking if he was around to call.

Barely two minutes later, Bad's username appeared in the voice channel. Dream drew in a careful breath and joined him.

"What's up, Dream?" Bad's even tone relaxed Dream almost instantly, familiar and warm as ever.

"Hey," Dream said, playing with the cable attaching his keyboard to the mess of wires tangled at the back of the desk in the office. "Thanks for answering so quickly."

"Luckily for you, I wasn't doing anything other than cuddling Rat right now."

Dream smiled. "How is she?"

"Oh, you know, being fussy like usual. She wasn't happy about her breakfast options this morning."

"Sounds like Patches," Dream said with a light laugh. "She's started turning her nose up at the brand I always get her. I might have to try something new."

"The things we do for our pets, hm?"

"Yeah." Dream fiddled with the cable while silence fell between them, his head aching with the whirlwind of thoughts surrounding him.

"I know you didn't call me just to discuss my dog," Bad prompted after a short silence. "What's up?"

Dream let out a quiet groan. "I just - I kinda need to talk to someone? But Sapnap's dealing with something else right now, and I don't know who else to trust with this."

"Sounds serious." Bad's voice remained as gentle as ever. "I'm always happy to listen, you know that."

"I know. Thanks. It's just - it's kinda a lot?"

“I can handle a lot. Are you sure I’m the person you want to talk to, though? Not George or your mom?”

“Mom’s busy,” Dream explained. “And George... well, it’s *about* George, so I can’t really go to him.”

Bad hummed. “About George? I’m all ears.”

“I’m warning you right now that it’s a lot. And I’m probably being an idiot.”

“Dream, I’ve talked you down from a panic attack on several occasions,” Bad reminded him gently. “Whatever you need to talk about, I’m here. Alright?”

Dream released a slow breath, calming the race of his pulse. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“I usually am.”

Dream chuckled. He stared down at his hands, examining his threads while he tried to figure out the best way to fill Bad in.

He ended up just blurting it out. “I have a red thread.”

“Oh?” Bad somehow managed not to sound surprised - he was always so calm, which was partly why Dream came to him whenever he was tangled in a problem he couldn’t solve himself. “You do? For how long?”

“Since I was a kid.” Dream drew in a careful breath and launched into the story - telling Bad everything about that day when he turned seven, how he’d searched everywhere for the better part of his whole childhood with no luck, and that he still had no idea who his romantic soulmate was.

“That’s kinda incredible,” Bad murmured when he was done. “That you met your person just once and you’ve been waiting for them to return ever since - that’s the beginning of a romance novel, Dream.”

Dream let out a hollow laugh. “It doesn’t feel like it.”

“No?”

“No, because...” Dream gritted his teeth. “Because of George.”

“Ah.” Bad’s tone turned delicate. “I wondered where he was going to come into it.”

Dream licked his lips. “I like him.”

“I know.”

Dream spluttered. “You *know*?!”

“Dream, I was there when you met him,” Bad pointed out, a smile audible in his voice. “I’ve seen the way you and him are over the years. I’m glad you’ve finally figured it out.”

Dream gaped at his computer screen, struggling to process.

“Frankly, I’m thrilled I was the one who brought you two muffins together,” Bad added after a second. “If you’re soulmates, that makes it even better. My matchmaking skills are unparalleled.”

“Wait.” Dream floundered. “That’s the problem, Bad. He’s not my romantic soulmate.”

Bad paused.

“He can’t be,” Dream continued, swallowing around a harsh lump in his throat. “He’s - he wasn’t there that day, on my seventh birthday. He can’t be the person on the other end of my thread, and I - I feel *horrible* because there must be this person out there somewhere waiting for me, and all I can think about is George.”

Bad hummed, soothing as ever. “Are you sure it can’t be him?”

“He’s never been to New York.”

“Are you sure about that? He’s been to America before.”

Dream stopped short. “Has he?”

“He’s taken family holidays, Dream,” Bad said, amused. “He’s told me before about coming to America as a child. More than once, I think. He’s even been in Florida before, just not since he’s known you.”

Dream was drowning in this new knowledge. *How* could he not have known this? George had never told him - Dream was sure he’d remember if he had, he’d never have forgotten such important information.

George had been in America as a child.

What if...

“No,” Dream said quickly, cutting that train of thought off before it could take flight. “He’s - he’s never been in New York though, right? I’d know if he had, I’m sure I would.”

Bad clicked his tongue. “I’m not sure, but I could ask him?”

“No, no.” Dream shook his head, panic clawing up his throat. “George can’t *know*, he can never know about any of this.”

“He doesn’t know you have a red thread?” Bad asked, surprised.

“Of course not.”

“Why haven’t you told him?”

“What good would it do?” Dream asked weakly. “He’s not - *he* doesn’t have a red thread, not yet, so if I told him that I do then it would just - blow everything up in my face. He thinks we’re gonna be platonic soulmates when we meet.”

“Right. Platonic.” There was an edge to Bad’s tone that Dream couldn’t quite read. “Are you sure about that?”

“Of course I am. He’s probably right, I just need to - to get over this.” Dream closed his eyes, rubbing two fingers against his forehead. “I’m having these stupid feelings, if I can just - work through them, deal with them until they go away, then I won’t ruin everything before he gets to America. Right?”

Bad was quiet for a good few minutes.

Dream stared at his computer screen, quietly despairing. His video was almost ready to upload.

“You’re in a bit of a predicament, aren’t you?” Bad said finally.

Dream let out a harsh laugh. “Yeah, you can say that again.”

“The thing is, Dream, you can’t just pretend you’re not feeling what you’re feeling.”

Dream grimaced. “But I need to figure out a way to do exactly that.”

“Come now, you know as well as I do that isn’t how it works.”

“Then what do I do?” Dream asked quietly, his heart aching.

Bad hummed. “You have to accept things as they are. You like George - that’s not a bad thing.”

“But—”

“Forget about the threads for a second,” Bad interrupted gently. “The universe gives them to us for a reason. Just think about you and George - what you guys have has never fit into a neat box. Whatever you’re feeling for him, make sure you feel it with your whole heart. Don’t try and push it away.”

Dream swallowed. If he did that, he’d end up drowning.

“Things will work out, I’m sure of that, but you have to be honest with yourself.” Bad paused.
“And with him, preferably.”

“I can’t tell him about this,” Dream said desperately. “He *can’t* know.”

“I’m not going to tell you what to do, Dream, but this is George we’re talking about.” The smile was back in Bad’s voice. “He can read you like a book. He’s got to know something’s going on with you - maybe it would be better for the both of you to clear the air.”

Dream shook his head rapidly. “The last thing I want is to scare him off. I can’t do that, Bad, I can’t - I can’t lose him.

“I really don’t think you will,” Bad soothed. “I’m not going to force you, but talking to him might not be as terrible as you think.”

Dream made a noncommittal noise in response, doubtful. Trying to pin George down to a serious conversation was difficult enough as it was, and the last thing Dream wanted was to freak him out before he ever even made it to Florida. The terror of losing George far outweighed any potential benefits from talking to him about this.

No, Dream would continue to squash his feelings until George arrived and they touched, and then they’d both know exactly where they stood.

Bad continued to chat with him for a while, until Dream was settled enough that his racing thoughts calmed and he felt more at peace with himself. One thing Bad advised stuck with him - that he needed to feel his feelings fully, and accept them for what they were without trying to change them. Dream had always been an optimist. Everything would work out somehow, he had to trust that his heart wouldn’t lead him down such a dark path that he couldn’t claw his way back.

Eventually, a faint crash in the background of Bad’s call along with a cry of “*Rat, no!*” left Dream on his own again. He left Bad to go deal with whatever disaster his dog was causing and uploaded

his video, then relocated to his bedroom to bask in the reaction from his fans for a while.

Lying on his bed scrolling twitter helped to settle the last of the anxiety swirling through Dream's mind. His feelings for George couldn't be wholly bad, because love never *was* bad, was it? He loved George, and that could only lead to good things, no matter if George loved him back in exactly the same way or not. Dream still had this wonderful person in his life. He should treasure what they had while he had it.

After a while of liking various reactions to his newest video but no reappearance from George, Dream switched over to his fanart account and scrolled through the tags, admiring the creativity of his audience. A lot of the posts were tagged *dreamnotfound* as well as with his own username, and Dream found himself staring at digital versions of himself and George finally meeting in real life, holding each other, George's head on his chest, his arm slung around George's shoulders - the two of them together in a million different ways.

He couldn't resist liking a few of his favourites, including one where George was sleeping in Dream's lap. He saved that one to his phone, tucking it away in a secret folder no one else knew about along with all the screenshots he saved of George's face.

He hoped to God George never found out about that.

His phone vibrated then, a message from George lighting up in discord yelling at him to get on voice chat. Dream grinned, navigating to the app and plugging in his headphones because he couldn't be bothered to move over to his desk, comfy in his blankets with Patches on his lap.

George was in their private voice channel, Dream noted with a smile, locked so no one else could join. As soon as he entered, George's voice burst into his ears, enthusiastic. "Finally! I thought you were never gonna get here."

"You literally *just* messaged me," Dream told him off, a smile fighting its way onto his lips.

"Because I just got home, idiot. I realised I needed to stage an intervention when I saw you moping on twitter."

Dream froze. "What?"

"The art?" George's voice was rich with amusement, but a trickle of cold fear dripped down Dream's spine all the same. "The fans are screaming about it, Dream. Didn't realise you wanted me on your lap so badly."

Dream swallowed around a thick lump in his throat. He had no defence - what defence *was* there to liking very shippy fanart of himself and his best friend?

Before he could flounder too far, George's laughter spilled out of his headphones again. "Okay, this one is quite good though, actually. They got my face right, though I don't know why they always make me so *tiny*."

"Because you are," Dream managed. "I am a lot taller than you."

"Not by *that much* though. I look like you could pick me up and throw me over your shoulder."

Dream's thoughts screeched to a halt.

He grappled with himself while his brain decided to present him with all the images of him doing exactly that, how easy it probably *would* be to lift George into his arms and carry him about

wherever he went, and *no*. Dream needed to cut off this line of thought immediately.

He retreated to safe ground - teasing the life out of George.

“You probably want me to, huh?” Dream kept his tone light, deliberately poking at George to deflect away from his own inner turmoil. “You just want me to carry you everywhere.”

George spluttered. “You’re the one liking all the suggestive fanart, Dream, not me.”

“Come on, it isn’t even that suggestive. There’s a lot worse out there.”

“Oh really?” Dream could *hear* George wagging his eyebrows. “You know that, do you? You’ve gone looking?”

Dream choked on nothing, caught. There was *no* safe way out of this one and he knew it.

He remembered what Bad had told him. *Feel your feelings fully.*

“I’m just saying,” Dream said, embracing chaos. “Nothing I’ve liked is even that questionable. You’re the one reading too much into it.”

George let out a quiet laugh. “I don’t think best friends fall asleep in each other’s laps, Dream.”

“Why not? I wouldn’t mind if you did.”

“That’s because you’re weird,” George answered without missing a beat, though his tone was much warmer than it had been before. “I don’t even know that I’d want to, what if you’re all bony?”

“I don’t know, but you seem to like falling asleep to the sound of my voice.”

“Well, yeah.” George went quiet, his voice soft. “That’s true.”

Dream smiled. “Is that why you called now? Want me to talk to you to sleep again?”

“That’s not the *only* reason. I also had to stop you covering your twitter with strange likes.”

“But you *do* want me to talk to you to sleep?” Dream grinned, proud.

George let out a quiet sigh. “Yeah. It’s nice when you do that.”

Dream’s heart fluttered beneath his ribs. Making George happy lit up some hidden part of his brain, pride and satisfaction flooding through him every time George alluded to enjoying Dream’s presence.

“I like it too,” Dream confessed with a smile. “I like ending the day with you.”

“Mm, me too.”

“How was hanging out with your dad?” Dream asked, curling into his blankets.

George scoffed. “Not what I want to talk about.”

“Oh?” Dream hesitated, unsure whether to push. “That bad?”

“Probably worse.” George let out a quiet sigh, the sound of him rolling over in his blankets rustling in Dream’s headphones. “I really don’t want to talk about it, Dream, can you just - talk to me

instead? Tell me what you've been doing today."

Dream thought about his earlier conversation with Bad and winced. There was no way he could share that with George, so he cast about for something else instead, settling on describing to George the scene he'd walked in on earlier when he went down to get lunch and found Sapnap sprawled out on the couch playing an old Pokemon game while Patches lay curled up at his feet.

George drifted into sleep not long after, but Dream stayed awake for a while, just staring at the open call on his phone screen and listening to George's quiet breathing.

The fondness in his chest was impossible to deny.

Feel all your feelings, Dream reminded himself, and closed his eyes, letting himself drown in the intensity of the love he held for George.

Just as he faded into sleep, he barely felt the faintest tug around his ring finger, his red thread tightening around his skin.

Dream woke up late the next morning.

He blinked his eyes open to the sun streaming in through his windows, having forgotten to close his blackout blinds before he went to sleep. His phone was buried in his blankets, completely dead, and there was no sign of Patches curled up in her usual spot by his side.

Blearily, Dream connected his phone to its charging cable and dragged himself out of bed, heading to the shower.

In the hall, he could hear faint voices coming from the kitchen - Sapnap's laughter louder than anything. Dream broke into a smile. He hadn't heard Sapnap laugh like that in a while, not since he'd come back from meeting Karl and been moping around the house like a constant rainy cloud.

Dream got washed and dressed quickly, not bothering to dry his hair before he padded downstairs so it fell in damp blond curls around his ears. Patches met him on his way down, slinking out of Sapnap's room like she'd been caught somewhere she shouldn't be.

"You're abandoning me," Dream accused, bending down to scoop her into his arms. She purred in his ear and curled into his chest, claws digging into his arm.

Moving carefully down the stairs so he didn't drop her, Dream padded into the kitchen to find Sapnap standing at the counter making pancakes - *pancakes?* - with his phone propped open on a pile of cookbooks on the counter in front of him.

Dream stopped short in the doorway, staring at him. "Are you *cooking*!?"

"Oh, hi, Dream." Sapnap spun around, a giant grin on his face, and he looked calmer than Dream had seen him all week. Dream relaxed in response, glad to see him looking so at ease.

Then he saw how high the flame was turned up on the stove and yelped, putting Patches down and rushing across the kitchen to turn down the heat.

"You are going to burn the *house* down," Dream accused, peering suspiciously at the lump of batter sizzling in the pan. "Why are you making pancakes?"

“It’s George’s idea,” Sapnap said cheerfully, pointing at his phone.

Dream looked up at the pile of cookbooks, his heart jolting to a stop when George’s face peered out from Sapnap’s phone screen, open on a facetime call. Sapnap pulled his headphones out, disconnecting them, and George’s face crackled out of the speaker loud and clear.

“I just saw Dream’s arm *and* leg walk across the kitchen,” George announced happily, his dark eyes sparkling. “And shoulders. I definitely saw some shoulders, too.”

Dream flushed, checking to see how much of himself was currently visible and moving completely out of shot. “Wow, Nick, you could have *warned* me.”

“He couldn’t see anything,” Sapnap waved him away with the spatula.

“Shoulders,” George said, nodding along. “And a hint of blond hair. Did you shower or were you out walking in the rain?”

Dream snorted, self-consciously running a hand through his damp curls. “Why would I be walking in the rain? I literally just woke up.”

“You didn’t answer any of my messages.” George pouted at the camera, exaggerating the expression by widening his eyes.

Dream tried to ignore the way his heart jumped in response. “My phone’s dead, sorry.”

“He’s here now,” Sapnap said, poking the pancake with a spatula. “Maybe he can rescue breakfast, I think I’m kinda ruining it.”

“You had the pan too hot,” Dream told him.

Sapnap made a face. “George told me to make it hotter.”

“Never listen to *George* in the kitchen, Jesus, this is the man who didn’t know how to open a bottle of oil.”

“Hey,” George said indignantly.

Dream just snickered and nudged Sapnap out of the way with his hip, picking up the spatula, making sure to keep out of sight of the camera. Sapnap relented easily enough, picking up his phone and turning the camera purely on himself while he went to feed Patches, which allowed Dream to breathe a little easier.

He knew George would see his face one day, but... not like this. Dream needed time to prepare before *that* particular heart attack.

“I told George about my thread,” Sapnap said, holding up his left hand to the camera.

“I can’t believe it’s *Karl!*” George slammed his hand into his desk, audible even from across the kitchen. “I wish I could *see it*, I half don’t believe that you’re even telling me the truth.”

“It’s there,” Dream confirmed, glancing over to Sapnap’s left hand where the new red thread dangled from his ring finger. “You’ll see for yourself once you get here.”

“Yeah, because George is my soulmate too,” Sapnap cooed. “Do you think we’ll have a red thread too, George baby? I could have more than one romantic soulmate.”

George snorted. "You wish."

"You hurt me," Sapnap said, placing a hand dramatically to his chest.

George just scoffed, and Dream stared furiously at the pancakes, trying not to think about George getting a red thread one day and it not being attached to him.

"I'm actually more curious about you guys and Karl," Sapnap said after a minute, coming to lean against the counter beside Dream. He kept the camera pointed just at himself, but if Dream looked out of the corner of his eye he could see George's face looking out all the way from England.
"Like, will you be soulmates with him now I am? We *are* the dream team, after all."

"I'll meet him when I get there," George shrugged. "Would be cool to have another yellow thread."

"Dream?" Sapnap asked, and something in his tone made Dream turn. Sapnap was looking up at him with an almost hopeful glint to his eyes, his expression carefully neutral. "Would you meet Karl, too?"

"Yeah, of course, one day," Dream nodded. "Especially if he's gonna be your life partner, or whatever. I bet we're all threaded to him."

"I'd like that a lot." Sapnap sounded nervous. "It feels weird that I've met him but you guys haven't. You're, like, all my people."

Dream broke into a fond smile, his chest brimming with warmth.

"You could meet him soon, if you wanted, Dream," Sapnap commented carefully after another short silence.

Dream shot him a look, in the process of flipping a pancake with his spatula. "What?"

"Well, Karl - he wants me to go back to hang out with him again, and I really want to say yes, but..." Sapnap drew in a deep breath, his gaze fixed on Dream's face. "I wondered if - would you want to meet him too? Maybe?"

Dream froze.

"I'm not asking you to face reveal," Sapnap said quickly, holding up a hand palm-out. "I just - he could come here, maybe? Or he could come pick me up to take me back to his place, if you didn't want to travel to North Carolina, I just - I just really want to know if you and him are soulmates. It feels so weird, not knowing that."

Dream bit down hard on his inner cheek. The sizzling pan invaded his senses, the sound and sight and smell of cooking pancakes grounding him while his brain digested what Sapnap was suggesting. He tried to imagine it - meeting Karl in real life - and all his thoughts ground to a halt.

Karl wouldn't out him, he knew that. Karl would keep his face hidden, wouldn't even *tell* the internet they'd met up if Dream asked him not to.

And yet...

"I... don't know," Dream said cautiously. He glanced to the side, caught sight of George's face on Sapnap's phone screen, and his heart tugged. "I can't imagine meeting anyone in real life until I've met George."

He didn't think he imagined the way George's face lit up as soon as those words left his lips.

Sapnap arched a brow at him. "Explain?"

"It's just..." Dream let out a careful breath, refocusing on the pancakes. He deposited the one in the pan onto a plate and picked up the bowl of batter, starting on the next one. "I need to know if George is my soulmate before I can meet anyone else."

"*If* he's your soulmate?" Sapnap let out a disbelieving laugh. "As if there's any question!"

"I get what he means," George piped up, eyes fixed on the corner of the screen where Dream's voice must be coming from. "I want to know for sure, too."

"You met Wilbur and Tommy!" Sapnap accused.

"That's different." George bit his lip, shifting on his desk chair to tuck his knees into his chest. "I - I'm with Dream. I want to know if he and I are soulmates before we go meeting other people."

Dream bit back a wide smile, fondness sitting thick in his chest.

"You're both idiots," Sapnap announced, looking from George on his phone screen to Dream standing next to him. He shook his head. "Literally, you're both *so stupid*. How either of you can think you won't be soulmates is absolutely beyond me."

"I just don't want to meet anyone else until we know for sure," Dream insisted. "Tell Karl he's more than welcome to come and stay once George is here, I just - I can't meet him until then, I'm really sorry."

Sapnap waved him away, scrunching his face up. "Ugh, it's *fine*. You two are so weird."

"I think Dream's right," George said, and when Dream chanced a glance at the screen he saw a smug grin decorating George's face. "He's saving himself for me."

Dream rolled his eyes. "Always, darling."

"Ewww." Sapnap grimaced, carrying the camera away from Dream. "You're both disgusting. How are you worse than me and Karl when we are *literally* romantic soulmates?"

The sound of George's bright laughter echoed through the kitchen - a ghost of his presence. Dream could picture him in the room so perfectly, warm and funny and *right there within reach*.

"At least meet Karl virtually, then," Sapnap complained. "He's streaming later - will you guys come play with us?"

"Yeah, of course," Dream agreed easily, figuring he owed Sapnap for putting up with all his weird hangups about George. "And you should still go visit him again, like you want to. I'll buy your plane tickets."

"Sugar daddy," George said, his grin audible through the phone speakers.

Sapnap squinted up at Dream. "I don't know if I should leave you alone again so soon. George showed me some of what you were liking on twitter last night."

Dream spluttered. He tried to think of a way to defend himself, but found he didn't really have an answer, so he just threw a stray piece of batter at Sapnap instead. It landed in his hair despite Sapnap's yelped attempt at a dodge, clinging to short brown strands.

“You’re the worst,” Sapnap announced, running his hand through his hair with a grimace. “I’m definitely making you pay for the tickets now.”

Dream grinned. “Go get my wallet and buy them right now.”

“Seriously?”

“It’s in my coat pocket, I think - if not it’ll be in one of my jackets.”

Sapnap cheered and disappeared out into the hallway, reappearing a few minutes later with Dream’s card in his hand and plane tickets open on his phone browser. He booked them for three weeks’ time, as soon as Karl next had some free time, because as Sapnap explained neither he nor Karl were particularly enjoying time apart since the red thread tied them together.

“We have a lot to talk about, and there’s only so much you can do over the phone, you know?” Sapnap said, munching on pancakes while sitting at the breakfast bar.

Dream, opposite him, glanced at George’s face still on video call and let out a dry laugh. “Yeah. I know what you mean.”

“I’ll be there soon,” George said quietly, his eyes darting across the screen to where he could hear Dream’s voice even if he couldn’t see his face. “We’ll talk all you like then.”

Dream smiled, glancing down at his own plate with his heart hammering beneath his ribs. He didn’t know what to make of it when George said things like that - comparing their situation to Sapnap and Karl’s felt dangerous. The ice under their feet grew thin.

After breakfast, Sapnap and Dream retreated to their individual spaces - Sapnap to his bedroom, Dream to his office - and they all hopped on voice chat with Karl. Before Karl started streaming, Dream made sure to make his opinion known, talking loudly to override the shouting match Sapnap and George were currently having over who was the better roleplayer on the SMP.

“I like you, Karl,” Dream said into his mic, listening to Karl’s pleased noise in response. “But if you hurt Nick, I will murder you with my bare hands.”

Karl let out a surprised laugh.

“Dream!” Sapnap yelled, cutting off his argument with George mid-sentence. “I told you *not to do this!*”

“What?” Dream defended himself. “I’m just making sure Karl understands the situation.”

“I am going to come into your room at night and stab you with your own kitchen knife.” Sapnap sounded flustered, and down the hall Dream could hear a distant *thud* that sounded like his head hitting his desk. “Karl, please ignore him.”

“No, don’t ignore me, Karl. If you don’t hurt him, you have nothing to worry about.”

“Point taken,” Karl said, amused. “I wasn’t planning to, man, don’t worry. I appreciate you looking out for him.”

Dream grinned. “I knew there was a reason I liked you.”

“Personally, I don’t care if you hurt Sapnap, Karl,” George said light-heartedly. “I’ll help you set up traps if you want to prank him.”

“George,” Sapnap hissed, and Karl and Dream both burst out laughing. “Fucking hell, why am I friends with any of you again?”

“You love us,” Dream teased, and his heart threatened to burst with fondness at the reluctant sigh Sapnap let out before directing their attention to Karl’s stream.

Three weeks later, Dream once again had the house to himself, and it didn’t take long for him to start climbing the walls.

Patches seemed to miss Sapnap’s presence this time, judging by the way she’d wander from room to room first thing in the morning, poking her head into every open cupboard or hidden nook, whiskers twitching. Her tail flicked in irritation when she couldn’t find him, and Dream grew used to walking past Sapnap’s open bedroom door to find Patches curled up asleep on his desk chair, her head resting forlornly on her little front paws.

“Me too, baby,” Dream sighed, and continued on with his day trying not to think about how much his skin itched when he was alone.

George kept him company - during the hours they were both awake, anyway. They’d got a bit out of sync because Sapnap had taken to calling Dream quite late at night, going over every detail of his day with Karl trying to analyse his feelings.

“He’s just, like, a *lot*,” Sapnap murmured in the early hours of the morning. “He won’t stop hugging me.”

“Do you want him to stop?”

“No. I want him to hug me more.”

“Tell him that, then,” Dream said with a soft smile, and listened to Sapnap’s shaky exhale with gentle amusement. Sapnap didn’t *do* feelings - he’d never been as open as Dream when it came to discussing his emotions - so Dream was thoroughly enjoying watching him struggle his way through navigating a relationship with Karl.

Their late-night conversations meant he was sleeping in later, though, and as such missing out on a few hours he could have spent with George in the mornings (George’s afternoon).

“Finally,” George berated when Dream appeared in the voice chat on the fourth morning of Sapnap’s absence. “I hate it when you’re not around, it’s like my day is missing.”

“Aww.” Dream rubbed his eyes, still waking up, and rolled over onto his back in bed. “Your day revolves around me, George?”

“A little bit, yeah.” George’s smile was audible in Dream’s headphones. “I had your stream playing all morning, I can’t believe you dared go live while I was sleeping.”

“It’s been a while since my last one,” Dream shrugged, then yawned. He’d been up late playing geoguessr, though it devolved into mostly answering questions from the chat rather than any actual gameplay. “We should do a discord podcast soon, we’re due one.”

“Mm, good plan. Have you just woken up? Your voice sounds funny.”

Dream smirked. “Yeah, I woke up to a string of messages from you yelling at me to get on voice

chat, so I came straight here.”

“Whipped.” George sounded pleased.

“Well, I thought it might be something important.”

“Not really.” George’s tone dipped slightly, something dark colouring his cheerfulness. “I got an email from the visa people.”

Instantly alert, Dream pushed himself upright, finding Patches curled up asleep in the blankets by his side. “What? What did they say?”

“Nothing, not really. Just the usual automated response, that they’re experiencing really high demand right now because of the pandemic but I’m still in the queue.” George let out a frustrated sigh. “It’s been a couple of months now and still *nothing*.”

Dream hummed, matching irritation simmering beneath his skin. He wished he could wave a magic wand and solve any and all delays keeping George from him - he’d even considered bribing someone in the immigration office before he realised that was a literal crime - but he knew there was nothing more they could do. They’d exhausted all their options unless any new evidence came to light.

“I hate not being able to *do* anything,” Dream grumbled.

George let out a frustrated huff. “Yeah, me too. Are you sure you can’t just hire a private jet and fly me out there yourself?”

Dream laughed, his eyes falling closed. “Unfortunately, even private jets still need to come through customs.”

George heaved a dramatic sigh. Dream understood his frustration - ever since they’d decided that George would be coming here permanently, he felt as if his life had been on pause, just waiting to truly begin once George was at his side where he belonged. The empty bedroom on the second floor, the sparse furniture in their house because they were waiting for George’s arrival to decorate properly, all spoke of the aching gap where there should be a person. Their missing puzzle piece.

“It can’t take too much longer,” Dream said bracingly. “In time for Christmas, right? That’s only a couple of months away.”

“Yeah, I hope so.” George sighed. “Still feels like too long.”

“I know.”

“It’s just *hard*, knowing you and Sapnap are already living my life without me.”

Dream’s lips curled up at the corners. He opened his eyes, reaching out to pet Patches where she lay warm and snug against his side. “We’re not really living it without you. You’re here on call with us almost all day.”

“When you’re awake, yeah.”

“It’s just harder this week with Nick away,” Dream soothed. “He keeps having middle-of-the-night crises and calling me to talk him through them.”

George snickered. “Probably freaking out because Karl held his hand.”

“Pretty much, yeah.”

“I think they’re cute, though,” George said in a rare moment of sincerity. “Sapnap seems happy.”

“He does, doesn’t he?” Dream thought back to how much Sapnap smiled just before he left, and how thrilled he sounded on the phone when he whispered excitedly about all the places Karl had taken him that day. They weren’t streaming during this trip - in fact, the internet didn’t know that Sapnap was currently in North Carolina - and Dream was glad his two friends were taking time just for themselves.

“Yeah, just like how *I’ll* be happy once I’m *finally* in Florida.” George let out an impatient sigh. “I want to be there already. I still don’t even know what you look like.”

“Just a couple of months,” Dream promised, trying to keep his tone soothing despite his own antsy emotions around George’s imminent arrival. He stared at the red thread on his ring finger, swallowing. He still hadn’t decided if he was going to tell George about that before he arrived.

Every time he thought about bringing it up, the words died in his throat.

“I was really glad when you said you aren’t going to meet anyone else before I get there,” George said suddenly. “It might be selfish, but I want to keep you for myself. The thought of *Karl* getting to see your face before me makes me feel sick.”

Dream wheezed out a light laugh. “Jealous, George?”

“Shut up.”

“It’s okay, I get it,” Dream said, thinking back to how awful he’d felt the day George met up with Wilbur and Tommy. There’d been a few other meet-ups since that occasion, but George made sure to give him plenty of warning and check in with him throughout the day, which settled some of Dream’s nerves. He was ridiculous, he knew, but he was glad George indulged him. “I don’t think I could meet anyone else before I meet you. It’s like my life won’t start properly until you get here.”

George hummed, the sound low and pleasant through Dream’s headphones. “You really don’t get outside much, do you?”

“Not at all, not really. I don’t want to risk anyone recognising my voice or seeing me with Sapnap.”

“Makes sense.” George fell silent for a moment, then tapped his fingers against his desk, the sound of nails against wood grating in Dream’s still half-asleep state. “When I get there, I’m gonna take you out to all the best places you’ve been missing out on.”

Dream beamed. “Oh, are you?”

“Yeah. You can show me all your favourite places and I’ll give you an excuse to leave the house, it’s perfect.”

“It does sound pretty perfect,” Dream admitted quietly.

“Right? I don’t just want to see the touristy places either, I’ve done those on holidays. I want to see all the secret places that only locals like you know about - like where you went as a kid, or the tree you fell out of when you got your scar—”

Dream’s breath caught in his throat while he let George ramble on. *Holidays?* He remembered

what Bad told him, about George coming to America as a kid, and the red thread around his ring finger suddenly burned hot against his skin.

Dream swallowed. "You've been to Florida before?"

George stopped mid-sentence. He let out a nervous laugh. "Uh - yeah, like, as a kid. My parents took me on holiday."

"How did I not know you've been to America?" Dream's heart was in his mouth. He stared down at his left hand, his red thread staring back at him mockingly.

George cleared his throat. "I don't know. It just never came up, I guess."

"Did you go anywhere besides Florida?"

"A few places." George's tone had turned cautious, that hard, jagged edge back that Dream hated and instantly wished he could banish. His pulse thrummed under his skin.

If George had ever been in New York...

No, he shut down his brain savagely. Even if George ever had been there, there was no reason to think he'd have been in the natural history museum on Dream's seventh birthday. The chances of that were minute, *infinitely* small, statistically impossible. The mysterious stranger on the other end of Dream's red thread couldn't possibly be George, no matter how much he wanted it to be. George didn't even *have* a red thread yet.

George changed the subject. "But yeah, when I get to Florida this time, I don't want to just do disneyland or like, the boring places. I want to see where you grew up. All your secret hiding spots, the schools you went to before you were homeschooled, the park you used to run around when you were arguing with your parents. You have to show me *everything*, got it?"

Dream drew in a slow breath, his heart still hammering beneath his ribs. The idea of taking George around his hometown, inviting him into all the parts of his life he'd been missing, had his chest aching with yearning.

"Yeah, of course," Dream murmured. "I'll take you anywhere you want, George."

The words dropped like stones into a lake between them, casting ripples far and wide. Dream leaned into them, embracing the chaos.

After a few quiet moments filled only with their breathing, George let out a light chuckle. "I'm still making you take me to disneyland, though. I want to see you cry on a rollercoaster."

Dream groaned, tipping his head back against his pillow. "You're gonna be the death of me."

"In one way or another, yeah." George sounded mischievous. "Not sure I want to end your life at a theme park. Maybe I'll pick my moment when you're asleep, I'll sneak into your room and surprise attack you."

Dream stifled a laugh. "I thought you were sharing with me when you got here, hm?"

A startled silence followed his words, and Dream's eyes shot wide open, wishing he could take them back.

But then George chuckled, the sound bright and amused, and Dream relaxed. "Wow, you *really*

wanna cuddle me, don't you?"

Dream bit his lip. "...How weird would it be if I said yes?"

"Weird as fuck," George answered lightly. "But I knew you were weird a long time ago. It's a bit strange though, imagining being cuddled by a faceless man."

"I'm not actually faceless in real life."

"I know, but I have no frame of reference! I just saw your shoulders and like, the tiniest bit of your hair in the kitchen the other week, and that is legitimately the most I have seen of you in the - however many years we've known each other."

"You don't know how many years it's been?" Dream asked, betrayed.

George hummed. "Not exactly. I don't really remember meeting you and Sapnap, I just know when we started getting close."

Dream made a disgruntled noise in the back of his throat. "You don't *remember*?"

"Not exactly. It's like you've just always been there, you know?" George smiled - Dream could hear it in his voice. "A faceless, disembodied ghost man I grew up with."

Dream pressed his smile into the back of his hand, his heart so full he thought it might burst. "I'll show you my face when you have plane tickets. Then you'll know who to look for when you get here, right?"

"Right." George laughed, the sound breathless with excitement. "That sounds like a deal. Now get up and get on your computer, I need your opinion on this plugin I'm working on."

Dream obediently rolled out of bed, apologising to Patches when he almost squished her, and booted up his computer with a smile so wide his cheeks ached with the strength of it.

Dream's good mood lasted the rest of the day, spending hours messing around with George on minecraft testing out the new plugin, finding some errors in the code along the way that caused some hilarious glitches. Giggling with George down the microphone was one of Dream's favourite ways to spend a day, so he stayed buoyant even when George fell asleep well before Dream was even remotely tired.

He went downstairs to hunt down some dinner, fed Patches, and watched a few episodes of some new netflix show his mom recommended so he'd have something to talk to her about next time he went over for dinner. When evening ticked into night, Sapnap called again with his newest Karl crisis ("he has such *nice hands*, Dream"), and Dream spent an hour or so talking him down before he finally crawled into bed himself, his dreams full of pleasant images of dark sparkling eyes under floppy brown hair.

His good mood was broken as soon as he woke up the next morning.

The faint buzzing of his phone against the nightstand stirred Dream from his sleep far earlier than he would have liked. He groaned, his head feeling fuzzy while he blinked his eyes open, eternally grateful to his past self who'd remembered to close the blackout blinds before he fell asleep the night before.

Dream was decidedly not a morning person.

The buzzing against his nightstand stopped a few seconds later, and Dream buried his face back in his pillow, determined to nap for at least another hour. Then the buzzing started up again and Dream hissed, reaching out blindly to shut off the noise.

His phone went limp in his hand.

Dream brought it down to his pillow, squinting at the brightness of his screen, and cold fingers wrapped around his heart at what he found.

Six missed calls from George, along with a string of texts on both discord and iMessage, paragraph after paragraph of too much information to take in at one glance.

Dream drew in a careful breath, easing himself upright to sit against his headboard while he opened the messages. Patches let out a grumbly meow by his side when he disturbed her, and he gave her an apologetic scratch behind her ear.

Reading through George's messages had his heart sinking down to his stomach.

George: *Dream I just got an email from the visa people, it's been delayed indefinitely because of the pandemic*

George: *What do I do now*

George: *Dream*

George: *Dream pick up your fucking phone*

George: *They said it's going to be at least January by the time they even process it, and it's likely to take much longer than that because of the backlog that's built up during the pandemic. I can't wait that long Dream I just can't please pick up your damn phone*

George: *Dream*

George: *I swear to god Dream*

George: *When you read these get on voice chat*

George: *I can't wait until the new year*

George: *Dream please*

Then, below the string of messages, a twitch notification: *ThisIsNotGeorgeNotFound is live!*

That happened ten minutes ago.

Dream swallowed, dread sitting heavy in his stomach. George's visa was delayed *indefinitely* - what did that even mean? They had no guarantee that it would even happen *early* next year, let alone before Christmas like they'd hoped. Dream felt sick. They'd even teased the fans about a Dream Team Christmas, that was how sure they'd been that George would be here in time.

Dream didn't want to think about several more months stretching ahead without George.

George. He sounded uncharacteristically upset in his messages, desperation leaking through his

words, and Dream just wanted to reach out and hug him and make it all better. George streamed sometimes when he was upset and couldn't get hold of any of his friends, relying on his audience to boost his mood, which must be why he'd gone live now.

Dream itched to help him. He cleared his throat, reaching over to his nightstand to grab his bottle of water and take a few sips before opening up discord and seeing George already sitting alone in their locked voice channel.

Dream joined him without comment.

"Dream!" George's voice instantly burst into his headphones, sounding normal apart from the slight strain Dream could hear behind his words. "I'm live, I'm live - I told you guys he'd be here!"

"I know, I saw the notif," Dream said, closing discord and switching over to twitch.

"We're playing geoguessr, I need your help. Where is this?"

"I'm just loading your stream," Dream answered with a light chuckle, doing his best to sound normal. His head was a whirlwind, desperate to talk to George properly, to iron out what they were going to do next and come up with a plan to solve this, because surely there had to be *something* they could do. Dream would do anything if it meant getting George to Florida.

But discussing visa issues in front of hundreds of thousands of fans was definitely a bad idea.

"There's gonna be delay, get on your computer," George complained. "I'll screenshare."

"Can't be bothered, I literally just woke up."

"Lame," George laughed, more harsh than usual. Dream wondered if any of his watching fans could pick up on the slight tremor in his voice. "It's *late*, Dream, we're so out of sync these days."

"I know, it sucks." Dream waited impatiently for the twitch stream to load, holding his phone in front of his face. He made sure to keep it muted so as not to mess up George's audio.

The image finally loaded to George's stream, his facecam turned on in the bottom left corner while geoguessr took up the full screen behind him. Dream focused on his face, studying his features. To most people, he was sure it looked like George was having a good time, no hint of stress in his appearance, but Dream was used to picking up on the most minute clues so he could see the tension in the harsh line of George's shoulders, the slight tremor in his tone.

"I'm thinking Malaysia," George said, double clicking on the screen to move further along the road. "Or maybe India - there's just something about it that's saying India to me."

"Could be." Dream hummed, waiting for the delay - he'd normally play with George sharing his screen over discord, and the twitch lag was annoying him. He contemplated getting out of bed, but also, he was comfy and warm and he liked being able to hold George so close to his face. "Are we driving on the left?"

"The right, I think?" George clicked several times in a row to go back down the road, drumming his fingers impatiently against his desk when the image took a while to load. "Ugh, it's so *slow* today, what is wrong with my internet?"

"Give it time," Dream chuckled, eyes fixed on the tiny image of George. He laughed again as George fidgeted, impatiently bouncing in his seat. "You're so impatient, George, wow."

“I want it here *now*,” George said, frustrated, and Dream paused. He didn’t think George was just talking about the game.

Visa delayed indefinitely. Dream swallowed. There had to be a way to fix it, there *had* to be.

“Are you gonna be streaming for long?” Dream asked, because he needed to talk to George about this properly, but he couldn’t when they had an audience of thousands.

George clicked his tongue, reaching up to brush his hands through his hair. “I don’t know, probably a while - I woke up this morning and realised I haven’t streamed in ages, and *you* wouldn’t wake up, so I had to come talk to chat instead.”

Dream chuckled, about to respond, but the words died on his tongue when he caught sight of George’s hands.

George wasn’t wearing gloves.

He wasn’t wearing gloves, and - and he had *threads*.

Dream made a choked noise in the back of his throat, shooting upright so fast that he disturbed Patches, who rolled over with a grumbly meow. He couldn’t take his eyes off his phone screen. George’s hands were still in his hair, fiddling with his fringe, and Dream could see the threads dangling from his fingers - two yellow ones on his right hand, on his pinkie and index fingers, knotted tight around his knuckle but cutting short a few inches from his hand. On his left hand there was just one thread - a beautiful, deep red, tied tight to his ring finger, and this one didn’t cut off - it trailed long and smooth all the way down George’s torso until it disappeared out of shot. As soon as he looked at it, the red thread around Dream’s own finger gave a sudden, sharp tug, so painful that he grimaced.

On camera, George flinched.

Dream could hardly process what he was seeing.

“You—” Dream breathed, the air thick in his lungs. “George, you have a red thread?”

George went visibly still. His hands dropped to his lap, his expression twisting into one of horror.

Even with George’s hands no longer in view, Dream couldn’t banish the image from his mind - George had *threads*, though he only had three, and one of them was a *red thread*. A red thread tying him to a romantic soulmate that Dream had never known about, and suddenly a rush of hot jealousy flooded through him, souring his stomach.

“You have a *romantic soulmate*?” He spit through gritted teeth.

George’s face drained of all colour. He jolted towards the camera, clearing his throat. “How can you see my threads?”

“You’re - you’re not wearing your gloves.” Dream swallowed, trying to remain cognisant of the thousands of people watching them right now - chat was going wild. “You should - you should really put your gloves on, George, you—”

“No, Dream,” George interrupted, slamming his hand down on his desk, panic apparent in his shaking voice. “*How can you see my threads?*”

Dream paused, frowning while he tried to figure that out, and then cold realisation dripped down

his spine like ice water.

Dream had never met George in person. They'd never touched.

So how could he see his threads?

A strangled sound escaped his lips, and it took Dream a second to realise he was the one it came from. He swallowed around a harsh lump in his throat, staring down at his own hands, the memory of George's threads burned behind his eyelids.

His red thread, sitting exactly where Dream's was.

Dream choked again, struggling to breathe.

"Alright, guys—" George didn't sound like he was faring any better, the tremor in his voice obvious to anyone listening, not just Dream. He leaned forward. "I'm gonna end the stream, alright - thanks for coming, thanks for all the subs and donos, I'll - I'm gonna go."

Just like that, the stream ended. George's facecam disappeared, his end screen showing up instead, and all Dream could hear was George's breathing in his ears, shaky and frail.

Dream took a few seconds to try and calm his racing thoughts.

It didn't work.

"Get - get on video call." Dream managed to speak, his voice much raspier than he expected. He jumped out of bed, tiredness forgotten in the mess of confusion and blistering *hope* eating up his insides, booting up his computer as he fell into his desk chair. "I'm just - I'm loading up my computer, hold on."

George audibly swallowed. "Dream..."

"Hold on, hold on." Dream typed his password in record time, switching straight to discord on his computer and grabbing his headphones, shoving them over his ears so fast it almost hurt. He rejoined the voice call, George's breathing still harsh and ragged. "Turn on your camera, George, now."

A shaky exhale, and then the video popped up on Dream's monitor. George was still sitting at his desk, looking like a bomb had just dropped into the middle of his living room. He stared at the camera with wide eyes, his lower lip trembling, dark hair falling across his forehead. It was getting long again, Dream realised idly. He liked it this length.

"Show me your hands," Dream said, fighting to keep his voice even.

George shifted, sitting up straight. His eyes darted to the camera and then away again, studying a point on his computer screen, and his shoulders lifted as he took a deep breath in. "Could you really see—"

"Show me your *hands*."

Without another word, George lifted both his hands up in front of his face, palms turned in. A shock of electricity jolted down Dream's spine when the threads were still there, two yellow and one red, knotted tight to George's fingers in beautiful contrast to his pale skin.

Everything about George was beautiful, even this.

Dream exhaled, hardly believing his own eyes. He dug his fingers into his pyjama shorts. “You - you only have three threads?”

George gasped - actually, audibly gasped. His eyes darted back to the camera again, looking right into Dream’s soul even though Dream didn’t have his camera on. “You can *see*—?!”

“Two yellow,” Dream breathed, tracing the threads tied to George’s fingers with his eyes. “On your right hand - that must be Wilbur and Tommy, right?”

George swallowed and nodded.

Dream allowed his gaze to drift over to George’s left hand - the hand that was currently causing his stomach to do somersaults. All his fingers were empty bar one - his ring finger tied with a deep red thread in exactly the same place as Dream’s.

Dream choked again when the red thread around his own finger gave another violent tug. At the exact same moment, he saw George wince, rubbing his right thumb over his left ring finger.

“Holy shit,” Dream breathed. Without a second thought, he reached up to turn his own camera on, removing the cap on his webcam for the first time since he’d bought this computer. If he was in any more of his right mind, he would have considered that he’d literally just rolled out of bed, still in his pyjamas with his hair a tangled mess of curls and his face unshaven, but in that moment he couldn’t have cared any less.

He turned his camera on and watched as George recoiled in shock.

Seeing his own face on the screen was a shock after so many years. Dream couldn’t even *remember* the last time he’d video called with someone - certainly not once since he’d started YouTube and streaming properly - so he found himself surprised by his own appearance on camera. His hair was a mess, falling in his eyes, stubble scratchy on his chin.

He looked up at George and all the air got punched out of his lungs.

George was *staring*. Not just staring - *drinking him in*, with wide eyes and an open mouth, examining every inch of Dream’s face as if he’d never seen a human before in his life. His hands were still visible, pressed to his cheeks as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Dream couldn’t take his eyes off George’s threads. “You have *hands*.”

“You have a *face*,” George breathed, his voice coming out in a squeak that would have made Dream laugh under normal circumstances. “And - and eyes, and *hair*, and cheeks—”

“Yes, George, I am a human being,” Dream laughed, his nose scrunching up.

George was glued to the screen, his lips curving up before he slapped a hand over his mouth to hide the strength of his smile. Dream could still see it, though, in the curve of his cheeks, the crinkle at the corner of his eyes.

“You have a cute nose,” George said, muffled by his hand.

Dream chuckled. “Is the rest of me not cute, too?”

“I - I don’t even *know*, you’re—” George shook his head, eyes darting about the screen like he didn’t know where to look first. “I - I think I’m having a heart attack.”

“Seriously?”

“Shut up, idiot, you gave me *no warning*—” George choked, pressing both hands to his cheeks again to hide his rushing flush. Dream drank in the pink on his cheeks, his chest warm and fuzzy. “You just - *turned your camera on*, just like that, what the *fuck*—”

“I can see your hands,” Dream defended himself. “And I - your threads, George. I can see your threads.”

George paled. He dropped his hands again, then hesitated, staring at the camera with fear apparent in his eyes. “How is that possible?”

Dream swallowed. Wordlessly, he lifted his own hands into view, displaying them to George for the first time.

George choked on nothing, his hand flying to his mouth.

“I think I might be going crazy,” Dream said steadily, watching George’s gaze flicker across the threads on his fingers before he settled on the red thread on his ring finger. “But - but you seem to have a red thread exactly where mine is.”

George made a muffled noise of protest, shaking his head rapidly.

Dream frowned. “Can you - can you not see mine? I thought—”

“No, I can, I can.” George rocked forward, his hands dropping enough to reveal the giant grin he was clearly struggling to hold back, fingers gripping tight to his jaw. “I just - I’m just having *several* heart attacks, actually, because I can - I can see your *threads*, what the actual *fuck*?!”

Blistering hope burst white-hot across Dream’s chest. “That’s only possible if we’ve touched before, right?”

George choked, slamming a hand down on his desk. “No, nope, *nope* - I mean, yes, that’s true, but also *no* because - because how in the *hell*—?!”

“You’ve had a secret red thread this whole time,” Dream said all in a rush, unable to take his delighted gaze off George, who was the most flustered Dream had ever seen him. “You’ve - you’ve been hiding a romantic soulmate this *whole time*—”

“So have you!” George accused. “Oh my God, you *have* - how did you never tell me?”

“How did *you* never tell *me*?!”

George spluttered, flapping both hands at the camera in some sort of distress. “I can’t, I *can’t* - this can’t be happening, Dream, how - *how* is this happening?!”

Dream drew in a steady breath, trying to relax because the rest of the world felt dangerously fuzzy, his entire focus centred solely on the person on his screen, trapped across an ocean from him. His heart was beating so rapidly he felt like he might crack a rib. “I don’t know. All I know is that I got a red thread on my seventh birthday, in August in the middle of a crowd in—”

“—New York City,” George finished for him, eyes wide. “New York City. I was nine, almost ten.”

Dream’s heart squeezed.

“Oh my God, it was on the 12th August,” George muttered to himself, hands flying to his face

again. “I never even *twigged* it was the same day as your birthday - oh my God, how—”

“You were *there*?!?” Dream could hardly breathe, the ground tilting under his feet. “In New York? You’ve been to New York before?”

Slowly, George nodded. “Once. My family took a holiday to America in 2006. I was in New York for one day - we roadtripped down the East Coast. Finished up with a few days in Florida before flying home.”

“One day.” Dream was struggling to grasp what was happening. “One - the *one day* you were in New York was the 12th August 2006?”

“Yeah.”

“My seventh birthday?”

“Yeah, fuck, it was.” George shook his head, a bemused smile spreading across his face. “I never realised that would have been your birthday, but it was.”

Dream just stared at him in shock.

“Holy shit,” Dream breathed when some semblance of thought returned to his brain, instead of just a constant stream of !!!!!!!!. “You - you were in the American Museum of Natural History?”

“I was,” George nodded, sitting up straight. “Oh my God, is that where - is *that* where it happened? I could never figure it out - I didn’t even notice my thread until I was in the car that evening, and we’d been all over the place that day - the Empire State Building, all around Central Park, the natural history museum—”

“It was there,” Dream stumbled over his words in his eagerness. “Under the T Rex.”

George’s eyes lit up. “The dinosaur exhibit! That was like, my favourite part of the whole holiday.”

“It was?”

“Yeah, there was this giant T Rex in the foyer - it was *huge*, I went running right up to it through the crowd, my dad was so mad because he had to chase me right through thousands of people—”

“I was standing right there,” Dream said, struggling to get enough air into his lungs. He felt like he was drowning in pure gold. “I let go of my sister to stare at the T Rex. I’d been begging for *months* to go to that exhibit for my birthday and I wanted to stop and look at everything. I was standing right under it when - when someone in the crowd brushed past me and I got my thread.”

George gaped at him. He held up his left hand, fingers spread, displaying the red thread knotted around his ring finger. Dream mirrored him, lifting his own left hand to the camera, and the thread gave a sudden, sharp tug. They both flinched simultaneously.

George met his eyes through the camera, expression displaying pure shock.

“Holy shit,” Dream said, his pulse pounding in his ears. “You’re my romantic soulmate.”

Then he burst out laughing.

All of the stress of the past few months - the anxiety over telling George about his red thread, battling down his growing feelings for his best friend, worrying and worrying about whether or not George was one of his soulmates - burst out of him in the shape of uncontrollable laughter. Dream

wheezed, tears springing to his eyes, his sides aching as he gasped for breath.

“Excuse you,” George said, staring transfixed at the screen. “I’m kinda offended that you find the idea of being my romantic soulmate so hilarious.”

“No, *no*, George—” Dream tried to gather himself, fighting back more laughter as he panted. “That’s not it, fuck, I’m just - I’m so *relieved*.”

George’s brow furrowed, confusion heavy in his dark eyes.

“I have been *freaking out* about this,” Dream continued when he’d caught his breath, sitting up straighter and watching how George’s eyes tracked his every movement. “For *months*, I’ve been sitting here shitting myself trying to think up a way to tell you I have a red thread, trying to explain away all my feelings for you because you seemed so dead sure we’d have a yellow thread when we meet—”

“Wait,” George said, eyes wide. “Your *feelings for me*?”

“Yeah. You hate talking about thread stuff, I was trying to figure out how in the heck I was going to talk to you about this—”

“Wait, wait, go back.” George swallowed. “Go back to the bit where you have feelings for me.”

Dream paused. Whenever he’d imagined eventually confessing to George, it was nothing like this - he’d thought they’d be in person, able to reach out and touch each other. The aching distance between them hurt more than ever.

But he’d come too far already.

“Yeah,” Dream said quietly, gaze fixed on George’s face. “Yeah, I do.”

George flushed deep red, his fingers curling into fists. He still hadn’t once taken his eyes off the screen since Dream turned his camera on, and Dream would be lying if he said he wasn’t a little self-conscious, unused to having George’s scrutiny turned on him. Dream was used to looking as much as he liked with nothing to give him away.

Now, George could see his every micro-expression.

“I can’t believe it’s you,” George murmured after a painfully long moment. He glanced down, spreading his left hand out wide, staring at the red thread knotted around his ring finger. “I can’t - is this even real? Am I dreaming?”

“Do you want to be dreaming?” Dream asked, nervous all of a sudden.

George shook his head rapidly. “It just feels too good to be true.”

“You - you want us to have a red thread?”

“*Dream*.” George sounded exasperated, rolling his eyes. “Do you even have to ask that?”

“Yes, actually.” Dream tilted his chin up, his heart hammering against his ribs. “Because I - I’m about to get, like, *really* happy about this, and I need to know you’re on the same page before I get too carried away.”

George stifled a snort in the palm of his hand. He looked up at the camera, dark eyes sparkling, and Dream felt so much affection for him in that moment that he thought he might actually drown.

“You can get happy,” George said, grinning. “I’m happy. I can’t even - happy doesn’t even *begin* to cover it.”

The smile spread across Dream’s face before he had a chance to think about stopping it. He lifted his left hand, pressing it up to the camera, palm-out, and a shiver rippled down his spine when George copied his movements until their hands were in the same space, virtually touching where they couldn’t physically.

George beamed at him. “Though, I am *never* letting you forget that the first thing you did when you realised we’re soulmates is *laugh at me*.”

“No - okay.” Dream held up a hand, fully prepared to defend himself. “You don’t *understand*, George, that was pure manic laughter made out of relief.”

“Who laughs when they’re relieved?”

“When you’ve been as stressed as I have, laughter is natural,” Dream insisted. “George, I thought I was ruining *everything*. You applied for your visa, so I knew I needed to tell you about my red thread or you were gonna get here and see it for yourself, and then you might hate me and want to leave - but also I *couldn’t* tell you because I have been so in love with you for months, and I couldn’t ever imagine feeling about someone else the way I feel about you.”

George choked, pressing a hand to his mouth.

“I felt so *bad* for whoever was on the other end of my thread,” Dream continued, breathless. “Because I knew they could never match up to you, and now - now I find out it’s been you all along?!” Dream shook his head, another wheezy laugh escaping him. “How could I *not* laugh?”

George was so red that he looked about ready to burst. Dream delighted in it, admired how good fluster looked on George, how he hid his face in his hands and ducked behind his hair, groaning into his palms.

“You’re actually my soulmate,” Dream breathed, physically unable to take his eyes off George. “My romantic soulmate. It’s been you this *whole time*, since we were kids, I - I can’t believe it.”

George peeked through his fingers at the camera. “I can.”

“You can?”

“I mean, how could it not be you?” George licked his lips, lowering his hands to meet Dream’s gaze properly, still flushed dark red. Dream itched to see it in person. “You’ve always been the only person who made me feel okay about my threads.”

Dream’s brow furrowed. “What do you mean?”

George hesitated. He took in a deep breath, gaze darting away from the camera for the first real time since Dream turned on his camera, studying a spot on his desk instead. Slowly, he lifted his hands, displaying his threads to Dream once more.

“You,” George said with a small, secret smile, pointing to his red thread. A shiver ran down Dream’s spine. George moved on to his right hand before he could say anything though, gesturing to the yellow thread on his index finger. “Wilbur. And—” he pointed to his pinkie, “Tommy. My only soulmates, so far anyway.”

Dream nodded slowly, drinking in the sight of his own thread attached to George’s finger. *His*

soulmate. “Yeah, and?”

“And, before I met Tommy and Wilbur, the mystery red thread was the only soulmate I had.”

Dream stopped short, eyes widening as he began to understand.

“And before I met you,” George continued, “Or - walked past you, I should say, we didn’t really *meet* then because I didn’t know it was you - before that day in New York, I had no threads at all. No soulmates.”

Dream’s stomach twisted. There were people with no threads, Dream had read about a few recorded cases, but it was rare - very rare. And, sadly, often resulted in the threadless person being shunned from society, pushed out of any relationships they managed to build because they weren’t anyone’s true soulmates. Part of why Sapnap’s relationship with his birth mom was so difficult was because she only had one yellow thread, tied to her own mother, who had passed away years ago.

If George had grown up without any threads - if Dream’s red thread was the first thread he’d ever received - then it was no wonder that he’d always hated talking about soulmates so much.

“You...” Dream trailed off, staring in open shock at George. “You were threadless?”

“Until I was almost ten,” George confirmed with a nod. “And even then, it was just this random red thread, we had no idea who it was even tied to - my mum and dad helped me look for a while, and my sister’s always tried her best, but they - well.” George grimaced. “It’s kinda hard to care much about a son who isn’t your soulmate.”

A rush of protective anger flooded through Dream’s chest. “They didn’t try to help you find me?”

“Not much. A bit - my mum did notify the authorities in New York, but they said it’s such a huge city and because we couldn’t even say where it had happened, they couldn’t really help us.”

Dream thought about all the effort his own mom had put into searching for his romantic soulmate over the years and seethed with quiet anger. “That’s shit, I’m so sorry, George - they should have done so much more to help you, that’s their *job* as parents.”

George let out a harsh laugh. “Yeah, apparently. I think - I don’t know, it was difficult, because my mum and dad have a red thread, and my sister has yellow threads with them both, but I just - don’t. They find it hard to relate to me.”

Dream thought about growing up knowing you weren’t destined to be with your only relatives and his chest *ached*.

“And then I never met anyone else, either,” George continued, chewing on his lower lip. “At school, my friends would all find soulmates - with each other, or their families, or whatever - but I just... never got a thread. They’d still let me hang out with them, but it was different when they knew who they were gonna spend forever with and I just... had no one.”

Dream cursed under his breath.

“I had my red thread, though,” George said with a soft smile, staring down at his left hand. “I knew that *someone* out there was meant to be mine. I was kinda impatient for them to hurry up and find me again, and I was *very* stressed thinking they could very well be in a different country, but I always thought that I would meet them again eventually. The universe couldn’t be cruel enough to only give me one person and then never let me find them properly.”

“Oh, George,” Dream breathed. “Shit, I’ve been right here, I could’ve—”

“You didn’t know,” George soothed, giving him a small smile. “I didn’t tell you for a reason.”

“Why?”

George made a face, his nose scrunching up. “Being threadless is kinda horrible. I like the internet because no one here knows - I get to be just like anyone else, you know? You always treated me like threads don’t matter, like whether or not we were ever soulmates you still wanted me in your life, and that—” George drew in a deep breath, tipping his head back to stare at his ceiling. “That meant more to me than I can tell you.”

Dream bit down hard on his inner cheek. He knew how much George struggled with sincerity, which only made his feelings that much more intense - for George to trust him with this was about the most obvious show of love he could give.

“And you and Sapnap, you always wanted to hang out with me.” George grinned, leaning back in his chair. “Sapnap’s always been convinced I’m going to be his soulmate, and you - well, you said it didn’t matter either way. And I started to wonder - maybe I’m only threadless because I’m in the wrong place, you know? Maybe - maybe I was always meant to be over there, with you, in Florida. Maybe that’s where all my people are.”

The breath got stolen right out from Dream’s lungs. He itched to reach through his computer screen, to stretch across the thousands of miles between them and bring George home, into his arms, surround him with all the love in the world because that’s what he *deserved*.

“We need to get you to Florida,” Dream said, his voice more choked up than he would have liked. “Like - like, *now*. Yesterday. You need to be here yesterday.”

George’s face fell. He glanced away, folding his arms across his chest. “Yeah, but - did you see my messages this morning?”

“Yeah, of course. That’s why I hopped on your stream.”

“So you know it’s been delayed indefinitely.”

“That was before,” Dream said, determined. He switched to his second monitor and opened up a new google search, pursing his lips as he started typing. “We’re going to figure this out.”

George wilted in place, sliding down his chair with a heavy sigh that tore at Dream’s heart. “You can’t just magic the immigration system faster, Dream.”

“Watch me.”

“*Dream*.” George rolled his eyes, exasperated but fond, and Dream *ached*.

“I mean it. There has to be something about soulmates, George - the universe has literally decided that we need to be together, the American government can’t stand in the way of that.”

George started laughing, hugging his knees against his chest while he watched Dream through the camera. “If anyone could figure out a way, you can. I’m so glad I’m never not on the same team as you.”

Dream grinned, scrolling through the official government website. “I’m always on your side, George.”

Watching George turn pink never got old.

Dream continued scrolling, skimming article after article about soulmates and visas and what to do if you found out your soulmate was in a different country - they couldn't be the only people this had ever happened to. His tongue poked into his cheek while he focused, clicking on link after link trying to find the information he needed.

A quiet chuckle had him turning back to the video call. "What?"

"Nothing," George said, dark eyes dancing. "You just - you have a concentrating face."

Dream furrowed his brow. "A concentrating face?"

"Yeah, you—" George gestured to his cheek, exageratingly sticking his tongue out. "You do *this*, and your eyes go all squinty—"

"They do not!"

"They do!" George insisted, his tone bright and vibrant. "Your nose scrunches up too—"

"Shut *up*, no it doesn't."

"It does. You have a concentrating face."

Dream wrinkled his nose. "You're the worst."

"No, it's - it's a *good* face," George said with a grin, leaning his chin on his fist. "It's so weird to hear your voice come out of an actual person."

Dream laughed. "Did you think I was a ghost all this time?"

"I mean, you could have been! I just..." George trailed off, biting back a smile. "I think I'm gonna need to study you. Your face is kind of a lot."

Dream raised a brow, flicking a quick glance to the camera. "What does that mean?"

"I'll let you figure that out," George said, smug.

Dream rolled his eyes and turned back to the article. "Do something useful and help me try and figure this out, don't just sit there and laugh at me. I'm *sure* there has to be something about soulmates here, they can't keep us apart anymore."

George snickered, reaching across his desk to pick up his phone. "If you say so. I still don't think even *you* can - oh, what? What the - oh *fuck*."

Dream turned back to the screen at the sudden drop in George's tone. "What?"

George was staring down at his phone screen, horrified. He scrolled quickly, eyes getting wider and wider with each passing second.

"What?" Dream asked, impatient.

George flicked a glance up at him, mouth falling open. "Uhh. Have you checked twitter?"

"No?" Dream frowned, twisting to realise he'd left his phone over on his bed in his rush to get on a video call with George. "Why, what's happened?"

“Uh.” George swallowed, his adam’s apple bobbing. “Check your notifications. And the tags. Uh - our tags.”

Confused, Dream opened a new tab and logged into twitter, surprised by the sheer number of notifications flooding his feed. He clicked onto the search bar and froze when he saw the tags. “Wait - why is *hashtag soulmates DNF* trending?”

“Um.” George cleared his throat. “Well - well, when you think about it, you did kind of announce on stream in front of all of my viewers that you could see my red thread, so...”

Horror twisted Dream’s gut until nausea climbed up his throat. “Oh, *fuck*.”

“Yeah.” George released a nervous chuckle, eyes fixed on Dream while Dream started scrolling. The sheer number of tweets shocked him to the core, people accurately guessing that Dream being able to see George’s threads meant they must have met some time in the past - the number of conspiracy theories flying around almost made him hysterical. Some people thought George was already in Florida, some thought they’d never been in separate countries and everything was a lie, others thought the whole thing was some kind of elaborate hoax.

Dream clicked on a clip of George’s stream and heard his own voice say, choked-up and shocked, *George, you have a red thread?* Ugh, he sounded ridiculous, no wonder the fans were running wild.

“Sapnap’s texted us,” George added, still scrolling on his phone. “And Karl, and Bad’s left me three voicemails - Quackity is *tweeting* about it, I am going to *kill him*—”

Dream let out a slightly hysterical laugh, pressing his hand into his forehead. He dreaded to think what was waiting for him on his phone, and he was reluctant to break the happy bubble he found himself in, drowning in the amazing, impossible knowledge that *George was his romantic soulmate*.

There was no mystery person wandering around out there that Dream was supposed to love. The person meant for him was George.

“We’re gonna have to say something,” George said, frowning at his phone. Dream itched to smooth out the crease furrowing his brow, to take his hand and hold him close and feel warm skin against his. “They’re going *wild*, this is madness.”

“We’ll figure it out,” Dream said, impossibly fond as he stared at George.

A small smile tugged unbidden at George’s lips, though he didn’t look up from his phone. “Do you mind if I tell Wilbur and Tommy? They’re messaging me, like, a *lot*, and they’re the only ones who know about my red thread apart from my family.”

Dream sucked in a sharp breath. Of course - they were George’s soulmates, they must have seen his red thread when they met up. A familiar itch of jealousy rubbed at his insides, but it was calmer than it had been before, because all Dream had to do was look at George’s matching red thread on his left hand and be secure in the knowledge that George was *his*.

“Yeah, of course,” Dream said, switching discord servers. “We should tell Sapnap and Karl too, right? Sapnap knows about my red thread.”

George swallowed. “He does?”

“Well, yeah, he saw it when he moved in with me.”

A funny expression crossed George's face. Dream caught it, recognised it even, and smiled. "George, don't be jealous. I'm jealous of Tommy and Wilbur knowing about yours before I did - we're even, okay?"

George scrunched his face up, but he didn't bother to deny it, which was already progress. He let out a sigh, pausing in his texting to shoot Dream a curious look through the camera. "You know, I was kinda mad at you for being so jealous of Tommy and Wilbur."

Dream grinned, sheepish. "Yeah, I was a dick. I'm sorry."

"You were," George confirmed. He glanced down at his hands. "I get it, but - but you have to remember, I didn't have *any* soulmates that I knew before I met them. Tommy and Wilbur are the first people I was actually able to hang out with in real life who are *mine*, you know?"

Dream sucked in a breath. He hadn't considered that, but George was right - no wonder he'd been so excited after a day spent hanging out with them, no wonder he'd been so giddy in the vlog footage (Dream didn't even want to think about how much Tommy laughed at him when Dream begged him for the unedited version. He had it, though, safely saved in his George folder).

George had been so thrilled to spend time with his first proper soulmates, and Dream yelled at him once he got home, sulking because he didn't get enough of George's attention.

"Oh," Dream said slowly, realisation flooding through him. "Wow. I was an asshole."

George stuttered out a surprised laugh.

"I'm sorry, George," Dream said sincerely, meeting his eyes through the camera and watching George's face soften. "I didn't know you were threadless before then. I can't even imagine what that feels like - yeah, of course, tell them. I'm glad they've been there for you while I couldn't be."

George smiled, a hint of pink spreading across his cheekbones. "You have been there for me, Dream. Even if you've been an ass about it sometimes."

Dream grimaced. "Thanks, I think?"

George laughed. "It's a compliment. You... it makes so much sense that you'd be on the other end of my red thread, honestly, you're the only one who's ever made me feel okay about it."

"Really?"

"Yeah." George regarded him through the camera, his voice warm. "You didn't care if we were soulmates or not. You still talked me to sleep every night and messed around with me on call all day, you still really wanted me to come to Florida no matter what happened with our threads. When I thought about having to tell you how few soulmates I have, and how I have this mystery red thread, I was never that scared about how you'd react because you always showed me that our friendship was more important than the threads."

Dream paused, genuinely touched. He hated the thought of George struggling alone for so many years, floating through life without any attachments - that was the last thing he deserved. George should be surrounded by love always, constantly told how precious he was.

Dream would make it his mission from now on to do exactly that.

"I really did believe that," Dream confessed, staring down at his own hands. "But I said those things mostly because - because I needed to know I'd still have you. I couldn't imagine whoever

might be out there on my red thread, and I didn't like the idea of meeting you and us having a yellow thread because..."

"Because you have feelings for me?" George asked, eyes bright.

Dream made a face. "Does that make you uncomfortable?"

"Dream," George sighed, leaning closer so that his face took up most of Dream's monitor. "No, of course it doesn't. I - you know I'm not good with words, but I - I'm really not upset about you having feelings for me. You're on the other end of my red thread, that - that means something for me as well."

Dream furrowed his brow, decoding George Speak. He grinned. "Are you saying you have feelings for me too?"

George flushed, ducking behind his too-long hair. "You *know*."

"I don't, actually, George. You'll have to tell me. Feel free to really spell it out."

"Ugh, you are so *annoying*," George huffed, looking away from Dream's smug grin, but Dream could see the telling crinkle at the corner of his eye betraying his hidden amusement. "It's even worse now I can see your face, your stupid *grin*—"

Dream made a betrayed sound, clapping his hand to his chest right over his heart. "I am so hurt right now."

"You're *not*, idiot." George shook his head, picking his phone up. "Go back to your research, I'm meant to be texting."

Dream snickered, his heart full and his stomach doing somersaults. He obediently went back to the government website, reading through more articles until he finally stumbled across one that looked promising - *what to do if you find a soulmate while your visa application is pending*.

Dream clicked the link, skimming the paragraphs quickly, then going back over them more carefully to make sure he really understood what he was reading. In his headphones, George chuckled, giving him a running commentary on their friend's reactions.

"Wilbur's saying he's always known we were meant to be, it was too obvious online - Tommy wants to tweet it first so he gets the most followers for confirming DNF is real." George rolled his eyes, typing quickly. "I'll tell him I'll set you loose on the SMP if he dares try."

Dream chuckled. "Break me out of prison finally, huh?"

"Soulmate privileges," George shrugged. He laughed. "Oh, Sapnap just sent a string of exclamation marks - and then lots of caps lock *I knew it*. He says - oh my God, he knew you had a crush on me?!"

Dream spluttered. "What?"

George's grin was positively *wicked* when Dream glanced at his other monitor. "He says *finally I won't have to deal with Dream whining about how in love with you he is*. How long has he known? How long have you known?"

"Too long," Dream grumbled, sinking down in his seat. He felt hot with embarrassment - not the bad kind, just the kind that came with truly being seen for the first time. He glanced at his own

face on the webcam, his cheeks pink, blond curls falling in tangles around his ears. “Tell him I’ll expose all his midnight freakouts to Karl if he says anything incriminating.”

George laughed. “*Incriminating?* Now I need to know what he knows.”

“No, you really don’t.”

George just giggled, the sound light as air. Dream thought he could float away on it if he closed his eyes and imagined hard enough.

He turned back to his second monitor, scrolling back through the article, excitement starting to swirl through his gut at what he was reading. “George, hey, listen - I think there’s a way we can solve this. The visa, I mean.”

George was instantly alert. He dropped his phone onto his desk with a clatter, all his attention diverted to Dream. “What?”

“Yeah, it says—” Dream skimmed the relevant paragraph again. “Hold on, I’ll share my screen - look, this paragraph here.” He shared his second monitor over discord, then highlighted the text to show George, words spilling out of him faster and faster with his eagerness. *“See - if you can prove that the person with the pending application has a soulmate in the US, the government will override waiting times and place the application on a priority list. This is not a guarantee of acceptance, but it may significantly reduce waiting times.”*

George drew in a shaky breath. “For real?”

“It’s literally the government website - and look, see, *proof of evidence*: anything that determines both people were in the same place at the same time when they received their threads. I still have tons of proof, my mom posted on every soulmate forum that exists about my thread, plus we contacted the authorities in New York *and* Florida. She even kept the tickets from the exhibit!”

George gave him a wan smile. “She did all that for you?”

“Yeah, she’s kind of extra.” Dream broke into a wide grin. “She’s gonna *freak* when I tell her it’s you - she’s gonna be so happy, oh my God. And she’s going to be desperate to meet you when you get here.”

George bit his lip, fiddling with his phone. “That’s really nice, but I - I don’t have any evidence like that, Dream. My mum did tell the New York people, but... I mean, they said they couldn’t help us, so...”

“There’ll be a record of it somewhere,” Dream insisted. A flare of anger at George’s parents’ lack of care for their son echoed hollowly in his gut, but he pushed through it, determined to fill in the gaps where they’d failed. “Do you have photos from that holiday? Anything that proves you were in New York on that date will be enough.”

“I don’t... oh, wait, actually.” George lit up, getting to his feet and sliding his headphones off. “One second.”

Dream watched with anticipation as George disappeared from view, the faint sounds of rustling echoing through his headphones. He reappeared a few minutes later with an old shoebox in his hand, sitting at his desk with it held carefully on his lap.

“This is my memory box,” George explained, flipping open the lid. He broke out into a soft smile at what he found. “It has a bunch of old stuff from my childhood, including photos, so if they’re

gonna be anywhere they'll be here."

"That's nice," Dream hummed.

"Yeah, my sister made it up for me when I moved out." George flicked through a few items - old photographs of a baby George that made Dream want to coo, a small stuffed bear, tiny baby clothes, and he already knew he'd be demanding to see the contents of that box properly another time. "Aha! Here we go."

George pulled out an old photo and turned it towards the camera, and Dream sucked in a breath.

He recognised that building.

There in the entrance to the American Museum of Natural History stood a smiling family - a man and a woman with their arms around each other that Dream recognised as George's parents from the few times he'd seen pictures of them. Leaning by his mum's side was a teenage girl who must be George's sister, and standing in the very front with a giant grin was a young boy. Dream would know that smile and those eyes anywhere.

"Oh," Dream breathed, his heart squeezing. "Oh, *look at you*, you were so cute, George!"

"Shut up," George laughed, turning the photo around. "It's dated, look."

There, printed on the back in old-style stamps was the date *12/08/2006*. UK format because the pictures had been developed over there, but that was proof enough if Dream had ever seen it.

"George, that's brilliant," Dream said excitedly, shooting upright. "I have photos from that day too, and the tickets and evidence of contacting the authorities and everything. It should be enough to speed up your visa application, I'm sure of it. They can't ignore soulmates even in a pandemic."

George bit his lip, fighting back a smile. "I can't believe you were actually there on the same day as me."

"I know." Dream shook his head, staring down at his hands. "I've *touched* you before. That's so weird."

"I know. I feel like I should have remembered it."

"Imagine if we'd known all the way back then," Dream wondered, the yearning in his chest growing stronger at the thought. They could have grown up together, kept in contact, maybe even moved closer once they knew they were soulmates - the idea of growing up with George within arm's reach made Dream's heart ache.

George hummed, the sound soothing. "It's happened like this for a reason. I'm glad I got to know you without knowing you're my romantic soulmate - it makes the feelings more real to know I would have had them whether we had a red thread or not."

"Mm, I suppose that's true." Dream cleared his throat, his expression turning wicked. "*Feelings*, huh?"

George rolled his eyes. He continued rummaging through the box, steadfastly ignoring Dream's light laughter, until he froze suddenly and let out a quiet gasp.

Dream raised a brow. "What?"

Slowly, a giant grin spread over George's face. "You're not gonna believe this."

"What?"

George lifted his hand, and held between his fingers was a slip of paper that Dream recognised very well - he'd stared at it more times than he could count over the years, watching his mom looking after it when he was too young to really understand, taking on the responsibility of keeping it himself when she'd given it to him permanently on his sixteenth birthday.

Tickets to the dinosaur exhibit, dated 12th August 2006.

"I kept them," George said, his tone the most delighted Dream had ever heard. "I totally forgot I did, but I tucked them in here when I was teenager, just in case I ever needed them."

Dream swallowed, a jagged lump growing in his throat. Much to his mortification, he could feel tears stinging beneath his eyelids, his voice choking up. He cleared his throat a few times before he attempted to speak. "We're very lucky that you did. That's irrefutable proof."

"Aww, you're *crying!*" George cooed, leaning closer to the camera like he couldn't get enough of looking at Dream's face. "Look at you, those are actual *tears*."

"Shut up." Dream sniffled, dashing at the corners of his eyes. "Scan those tickets onto your computer, I'm gonna start gathering the evidence today."

"Right now?"

"Yes right now, George, I don't want to waste another second when we could be getting you to Florida."

George drew in a sudden sharp breath, biting his lip. He looked straight at the camera, eyes wide, and Dream wished harder than ever that he could simply reach through the computer screen and run his fingers through George's hair, reassuring him that everything was fine.

"I'm gonna go to Florida," George said softly. "Like, for real. *Soon*."

"Yeah." Dream tilted his head, warmth spreading through him when George's expression shifted into one of open excitement. "You're gonna be here so soon, George, I promise."

George tipped his head back, exhaling loudly. "When I woke up this morning and saw that email saying my visa was delayed indefinitely—"

Dream flinched. "Don't even think about it."

"That's just it, Dream." George swallowed. "I genuinely didn't think I was gonna cope. It's been so hard already these last few months, I couldn't *stand* the thought of having to wait until the New Year, of just not *knowing* when I'd finally be able to move."

"I know," Dream murmured.

"But now..." George shook his head, letting out a disbelieving laugh. "Now, not only have we got a way to speed it back up, but I find out you're my romantic soulmate? I'm really not convinced I haven't been in a dream this whole time."

Dream laughed. "Would your dream have included the current twitter fiasco? Because I do *not* know how we're gonna deal with that."

“I guess not.” George leaned his chin on his fist, staring adoringly into the camera, and Dream’s chest fluttered because he wasn’t sure George had ever looked at him quite like this before - open and honest, all his walls down, literal hearts in his eyes.

Dream liked that look. He liked that look a lot.

“We’ll figure it out,” George said softly, his gaze never leaving Dream’s face. “I’ve got you on my side, right? Nothing in the world is gonna get in the way of you.”

A rush of unexpected bashfulness hit Dream in a wave. He ducked his head, blond curls falling in his eyes, and hid a shy smile while he turned back to the article. “You’re ridiculous.”

“And you’re an idiot.” George’s voice was so fond it almost hurt.

Dream huffed out a laugh. “Yeah, yeah, I know. Now scan me those tickets and I’m gonna put together an email, but I think we should call them too, to check the best person to send this evidence too. I don’t want to waste any more time. If we...”

George shifted in his seat as Dream continued talking, staring at the camera with that same open expression, and Dream truly did believe that he could accomplish anything in the world if he just had George looking at him like he could move mountains.

In the end, the twitter fiasco had to run its course, because there was very little Dream or George could do about it without jeopardising George’s visa.

The lady at the immigration office that Dream spoke to on the phone was very helpful, advising him on exactly what evidence he’d need to compile and where to send it in order to get the fastest results. However, she also warned him that sharing anything about the status of the application publicly could harm George’s chances of being accepted, effectively tying their hands.

Dream made do with sending out a vague tweet: *can’t say much yet but rest assured, George IS coming to Florida :)* and left it at that. George liked the tweet but made no public reply, and the fans, as expected, freaked out.

Dream entertained himself sometimes over the following days by scrolling through reddit, enjoying the various theories that cropped up over what could possibly be happening. A couple of people even got scarily close to the truth, though Dream supposed it wasn’t impossible to put the full story together, given the number of clues they’d accidentally left over the years.

Dream could still hardly believe it himself.

He said as much on video call to George three days later, the day before Sapnap was due home from Karl’s. He lay on his bed with his phone held high above his head, open on a FaceTime call, Patches curled up by his side with the phone tilted so that both she and Dream were in shot.

“It just doesn’t seem possible,” Dream said not for the first time, staring at the image of George, who currently had his cheek smushed in his pillow. “Like, what actually are the chances that you and I were both in the same place fifteen years ago?”

“I dunno, but it happened.” George scrunched his face up, thinking, and Dream could practically see him running the numbers in his head. “Statistically, it’s not a complete impossibility, obviously, but you’d have to take the number of people who were there that day into account, along with the square footage, so we could figure out how likely it would be that we’d be in the

same place..."

Dream hummed, fluttering his lashes in a way that made him look totally ridiculous. "My romantic soulmate is *so smart*."

George rolled his eyes. "I will hurt you."

"You wouldn't."

"I'm gonna throw a pillow at you," George said, stifling a yawn. "When I'm there. I've got a running tally of the number of times you've done and said something stupid, and I'm going to throw a pillow at you for every one."

Dream wheezed out a laugh. "You're *kidding*."

"I'm not. I'm currently at 1,246."

"What?!"

"It's a long tally," George shrugged, his dark eyes dancing. "Been keeping it for years."

"You couldn't throw a pillow at me a thousand times." Dream shook his head, giving George an appraising look through his phone screen. "No way, not with your tiny arms."

George squawked, offended. "Hey! I *could*."

"No, what would happen is you'll throw it five times, start complaining about your shoulder aching, and then whine at me to do it for you."

"Lies," George hissed, shoving his face in his pillow. "All lies, Dream, you know *nothing*."

"Oh really?" Dream grinned, rolling onto his side and propping his phone up on his pillow by his head. "I'd say I know you quite well actually, George."

George made a face at him. "My arms are not *that* much smaller than yours."

Dream raised a brow.

"Don't *look at me* like that," George muttered, screwing his face up. "This was easier when I still had no idea what you looked like, ugh."

Dream deliberately hardened his gaze, keeping it fixed on George's face. "Why, George? Do I make you uncomfortable?" He leaned closer to his camera, dropping his voice. "Does seeing me look you in the eye when I'm talking to you change things?"

George squirmed - actually squirmed, wriggling among his singular blanket, and Dream grinned, enjoying being able to watch George's reaction even if it was still through a phone screen. George shot him a tiny glare. "It was easier to flirt with you when I didn't know how stupidly hot you are."

Dream paused, startled. A sharp grin tugged at the corners of his lips. "Stupidly hot, huh?"

George groaned, grabbing his pillow from behind his head and shoving it fully over his face. "Oh my god, forget I said that. You need to stop letting me talk to you when I'm overtired."

"Oh?" Dream's grin widened, his heart fluttering beneath his ribs. "I think it makes you more honest."

“Shut up.”

“And I thought it was meant to be easier to flirt with people you find hot,” Dream added, enjoying poking at George when he was flustered, wondering just how far he could push. He couldn’t wait to try this out in person. “Especially if they happen to think that you’re gorgeous, too.”

George surfaced from the pillow, his hair a mess and his cheeks flushed red. He squinted at his camera. “You’re fucking with me.”

“George, I’m really not.”

“It’s hard to tell - this was always a joke between us before, I don’t...” George let out a frustrated huff, hugging the pillow to his chest as he rolled to face his phone. “I don’t know how much to take seriously anymore.”

Dream softened. He settled on his bed, fixing George with an earnest gaze to convey exactly how serious he was about this. “It was never a joke for me, George, not really.”

George furrowed his brow. “What?”

“I mean - maybe in the *very* beginning,” Dream conceded. “I like winding you up, that much is true.”

“I can tell,” George deadpanned.

Dream grinned. “Can you blame me? You’re so cute when you blush.”

“*Shut up*, idiot - go back to telling me how in love with me you are, that was easier.”

Dream took pity on him, admiring how George looked nestled in blankets. “It’s not been a joke to me for a while. Even when I first got to know you, messaging you about coding on Bad’s server, I just - I wanted to impress you so badly. Nick reminded me recently about how I used to spam his messages whenever you replied to me because I was so excited to get noticed by you.”

“Seriously?”

“Yep.” Dream grinned, sheepish. “I was a little infatuated even back then, I think.”

George muffled a laugh, but his dark eyes were fond. “On your George simp arc even as a teenager.”

“Apparently.” Dream shrugged. “My point is, this has been happening for a really long time for me. I just became more aware of it a few months ago, and this whole year has been a special kind of torture.”

“Torture?”

“Yeah!” Dream grimaced. “Keeping up the memes with you online, trying not to ruin our friendship because that is the *most* important thing to me, along with balancing the fact I had a secret red thread that I didn’t think could possibly lead to you... plus all the visa stuff and desperately trying to get you to Florida, and now trying not to out that DNF is real too early - this year has been *hell*.”

A small smile tugged at the corners of George’s lips. “Dnf is real, huh?”

“Well, yeah, I mean—” Dream cut himself off, panic suddenly tugging at his insides. He stared at

George, wide-eyed. “Shit, it is, isn’t it? Or am I getting way ahead of myself here?”

George rolled over, pressing a hand to his face to hide his grin. “I mean, yeah, but I wouldn’t put it like that personally. I don’t know how I feel about coming out through an internet meme.”

“Okay, when you say it like *that* it does sound kinda bad.”

“It’s still weird that this isn’t just a joke for you either,” George murmured, gaze darting back to the camera. “You say stuff like this so easily. I - I could never properly tease you in front of everyone because the line got so blurry, I was scared of slipping up and saying something too obvious.”

Dream grinned at him, his heart full. “As you pointed out earlier, I have said *several* very obvious things over the past year.”

George snickered. “True. I’m not sure we did too well on the not announcing DNF is real publically thing anyway. You literally realised you were my romantic soulmate on stream.”

Dream groaned. “Don’t remind me.”

“The theories are really funny. I read one this morning that said you’d actually kidnapped me and Sapnap years ago and you’ve been keeping us captive in your basement ever since.”

Dream snorted. “*What*!?”

“I know.” George cackled, flopping onto his back with his limbs spread-eagled. “It’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard in my life. You’re, like, the most gentle person in the universe.”

Dream blinked. “I am?”

“Yeah.” George smiled, rolling his head around to look at the camera again. “I’m probably the luckiest man alive, because I get to have you on the other end of my red thread.”

Dream’s heart fluttered. He bit down on his inner cheek, trying to contain the warmth threatening to burst out of him at any second. “You really mean that? You’re - you’re happy that it’s me, right?”

“*Dream*.” George sighed, fond. “There is literally no one else in the world I’d rather be tied to forever.”

Dream grinned, content.

“You’re also a complete pushover.”

“*George*.” Dream complained. “Don’t ruin the moment.”

George snickered, rolling onto his side again. “Sorry. I’m so shit with words, Dream, you know that - I can’t wait until I’m there in person so I can actually *show* you how happy I am.”

Those words did dangerous wriggly things to Dream’s insides. He swallowed. “You’re gonna show me?”

“Yes.” George stared at him, his gaze deliberately intense. “I am.”

The bottom of Dream’s stomach dropped.

“Just wait until I can touch you,” George murmured, pushing his advantage - Dream knew he liked

it when he could make Dream speechless. “I’m gonna leave you with no doubt just how much I love you.”

The breath caught in Dream’s throat. He turned his head, hiding his smile in his pillow. “Can’t wait to finally hug you.”

“I can’t wait to finally *kiss* you,” George said, blunt as ever, and Dream choked. George grinned. “What? Don’t tell me you haven’t thought about it.”

“I mean,” Dream managed to choke after a second, struggling to catch his breath. “Uh - I’m not gonna, like, pretend I haven’t, but—”

“Wait, I *know* you have.” George giggled, squinting at his phone screen - too bright in his dark bedroom, it was the middle of the night in England. “That stupid *am I in love with my best friend* quiz you took proved it.”

Dream groaned. “Can we forget I ever did that?”

“No, never. In fact, I want to know your answers now, you need to do an update.”

Dream heaved a sigh, giving George a disapproving look. “You *know* the answer now. I tell you often enough.”

“True.” George’s wicked grin softened into something gentle, his dark eyes warm. “I like that you can say it so easily. I... it’s not so easy for me.”

“I don’t need you to say it, George,” Dream told him firmly. “I might joke around and stuff, but I *know* how you feel. You show it through your actions.”

“Oh.” George glanced down, biting back a smile. “Good.”

“Plus, you’re telling me that you think about kissing me, so that helps.”

George laughed, his eyes scrunching up with the strength of his smile. “*God*, I do think about that, though. I think about it all the time.”

Dream spluttered. “Really?”

“Mm, especially now I *know* we’re soulmates.” George sighed, nuzzling into his pillow. “It’s like, before, I’d think about it by accident and then feel terrible, because I never knew if we were ever gonna get to be like that. I wasn’t even one hundred percent sure you *wanted* it. Like, you’re fairly obvious, but it still could have all been an internet meme for the fans.”

Dream squinted. “Am I really that obvious?”

George snickered. “Hate to break it to you, Dream, but yeah, you really are.”

Dream muttered a curse under his breath, hot embarrassment creeping up the back of his neck.

“But now I know about this,” George held up his left hand, red thread proudly on display, and smiled. “I let myself think about it properly. Because I know I’m allowed.”

“Of course you’re allowed,” Dream said quietly. “You’ve always been allowed.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t *know* that before.”

“Me neither, but it didn’t stop me thinking about it.” Dream made a face when he realised how that might sound, pressing his face into his pillow. “Well, no, not in a creepy way. I just—”

George laughed at him, dark eyes delighted. “In what way is that not creepy, Dream?”

“Shut up, you know what I mean.”

“Yeah.” George smiled at him, still hugging his pillow to his chest. Dream wished he could replace it, feel George’s arms wrapped around him instead. “You should get some sleep, Sapnap will be back early tomorrow.”

“Finally. The house feels weird when I’m alone.”

“Aw, are you scared?” George grinned. “I’ll protect you from any unfriendly ghosts.”

Dream rolled his eyes. “It’s not scary, it’s just weird. Patches misses him, she keeps wandering into his bedroom and crying.”

“Awww.” George rolled over, leaning closer to his phone. “Show me, show me, is she still there?”

“Yeah, she’s here.” Dream obediently lifted the camera so that George could just about see the top of Patches’ head where she lay curled up on his other side. George cooed, his expression softening so much that Dream’s chest ached.

“Aww, she’s such a *sweetheart*. I really hope she likes me when I get there.”

“She’s gonna love you,” Dream said decisively.

George squinted at him. “You always sound so sure about that.”

“Because I am.”

“What if she doesn’t, though?” George nibbled on his lower lip, his eyes darkening. “What if I get there and she absolutely hates me?”

“George, that isn’t going to happen.” Dream made his tone as reassuring as possible, picking up on real anxiety hiding behind George’s words - he wondered if there was more to it than just George freaking out about Patches not liking him. Maybe George was scared that he’d arrive in Florida and not fit in at all.

Dream knew without a doubt that wouldn’t happen.

“Patches is going to be just as besotted with you as I am,” Dream said soothingly, watching as George shrank into himself, flushing lightly. “She warmed up to Sapnap in like a month, and I don’t think it’s going to take anywhere near as long with you. You’re already a cat person. She’s going to trust you.”

George bit his lip, meeting Dream’s gaze in the camera lens. Dream still wasn’t used to having George look at him, but he held the eye contact, ignoring the slight shiver of self-conscious discomfort that rippled down his spine.

“I hope so,” George said after a minute. “I just want to get there and never have to leave.”

Dream grinned. “Trust me - once you’re here, I am never letting you go.”

“Oh, you *are* gonna kidnap me and keep me in your basement?”

Dream rolled his eyes, exasperated. “*George*.”

George giggled, the sound sleepy and overtired, and Dream was ridiculously, impossibly fond of him. “Go to sleep, George, you look exhausted.”

“Mm, probably should.” George stretched, his back arching, and Dream allowed himself to watch, his heart thudding beneath his ribs. He was allowed now, like George said - it still felt too good to be true. “Stay on the line though?”

“Of course. I’ll talk you to sleep whenever you want me to.”

George smiled, his eyes fluttering shut. “Just until you can cuddle me to sleep.”

All the air left Dream’s lungs again. He drew in a shaky breath, warmth flooding his chest. “You want that?”

“We’ve been over this, Dream.”

“I know, it’s just...” Dream trailed off, hunting for the right words while he studied George’s face - eyes lightly shut, skin smooth, a small smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. “Just because we’re romantic soulmates doesn’t necessarily mean you’re suddenly okay with, like - hugging and kissing and sharing a bed and everything.”

George opened one eye, giving Dream a *look*. “Excuse me?”

“I’m just saying, I don’t want to assume without checking in with you.”

George exhaled. “Dream. You’re sweet, but you’re also an *idiot*.”

“What?”

“I am absolutely, one hundred percent okay with all of that.” George closed his eyes again, probably to avoid the scrutiny of Dream’s gaze while they were drifting back into sincere territory. His voice was soft as he continued. “You don’t have to worry. Anything you’re okay with, I want.”

Dream bit back a smile, his heart fluttering. “You don’t know what I’m okay with, though?”

“Well, *I’m* okay with everything, so we can pretty safely assume that anything you want to do is fine by me.”

Dream stared at him, hope blossoming under his skin. “*Everything*?”

George mumbled something under his breath, curling up into a ball. “I just mean that you don’t have to worry about pushing me too hard. I’d be pretty okay with running into your arms the second I see you and then never leaving.”

“George,” Dream breathed, fighting back a huge grin. “*George*.”

“Shut up. You’re an idiot. I’m too tired to talk about this.”

“Okay.” Dream let out a quiet laugh, physically unable to contain the happiness blooming inside him. He rolled onto his back, leaving George propped up by his side. “You go to sleep while I tell you about my mom’s plans for when you get here. She’s *so* excited that you’re my soulmate that she’s going a bit all out and wants to throw you a welcome home party.”

George smiled without opening his eyes. “Really?”

“Mm. There’s cake. My sister is planning something too, she wouldn’t let me see her phone when they came over yesterday...”

George hummed, settling down while Dream continued talking, and Dream watched him fall asleep to the sound of his voice with his heart thudding loud in his ears.

The first thing Sapnap did when he walked through the door the next day was point straight at Dream and roar, “*I told you so!*”

Dream jumped where he stood in the middle of the living room, pressing a hand over his heart. “Jesus, you *scared me*.”

Sapnap ignored him, dumping his bags in the hall and striding through the doorway to the living room where Dream was currently clearing up the growing number of dirty dishes that had gathered on the coffee table during his week alone. Patches, disturbed by the noise, leaped from the couch and ran into the kitchen, her tail lifted high in the air.

“Now you’ve scared Patches, too,” Dream complained, juggling three empty bottles and two plates.

Sapnap grinned at him. “I told you so, Dream. Didn’t I tell you that you were being a fucking idiot?”

Dream rolled his eyes. “I thought you weren’t due back until eleven?”

“Flight got in early.” Sapnap threw himself down onto the couch, sprawling out spread-eagled, and Dream couldn’t help but notice how much happier Sapnap seemed than the last time he’d come home from Karl’s. He was beaming, his eyes bright, upbeat energy emanating from him in waves.

Karl must have worked some magic.

“Tell me everything,” Sapnap demanded. “Did you and George *really* only figure it out when you saw him on stream? Or did you deliberately out yourselves in front of two hundred thousand people?”

Dream groaned, carrying his collection of dirty dishes into the kitchen. “That was *not* deliberate.”

“So what happened? Give me *details*, Dream, twitter is still freaking the fuck out.”

“I know.” Dream grimaced, nudging Patches away with his foot when she wound around his ankles and refused to let him load the dishwasher. Sapnap, who had trailed after him, cooed and dropped into a crouch, offering a hand for her to sniff. She streaked towards him in seconds.

“She’s missed you,” Dream commented while he pulled open the dishwasher.

“Course she has, I’m her favourite.”

“Lies.”

Sapnap laughed, tipping his head back to eye Dream closely. “Seriously though, dude. You and George. What happened?”

Dream heaved a put-upon sigh, turning his face away to hide his smile. “George forgot to wear his gloves on stream.”

“Really? That’s so unlike him.”

“Yeah, he was... stressed.” Dream thought back to the string of upset messages about the visa he’d woken up to that morning and grimaced. “He wasn’t exactly thinking straight.”

“But that was before you knew you were soulmates?” Sapnap lifted a brow. “Tell me everything.”

So Dream did, filling him in on the news about the visa delay and then what happened when Dream clicked on George’s stream and saw his hands for the first time, and how they’d talked for hours afterwards just filling in the gaps from when they must have met as children. Sapnap whistled quietly. “You really didn’t know before?”

Dream shook his head. “It was the single biggest shock of my life.”

“I could tell. I’ve seen the clips, dude, you sound like you’re having a heart attack in them.”

Dream made a face. “I was *not* expecting it, gimme a break.”

Sapnap laughed, pushing himself up to his feet and leaning against the counter while Dream started getting out ingredients for lunch. “You’re happy though, right?”

Dream paused. He turned to face Sapnap with a giant grin on his face, affection bubbling up his chest, warming him from the inside out.

Sapnap wrinkled his nose and held up a hand. “On second thoughts, don’t answer that. You’re gonna be *insufferable*. If I thought the third wheeling you two made me do was bad before...”

“Hey.” Dream elbowed him in the ribs, satisfied when Sapnap yelped. “Shut up and tell me about Karl.”

Sapnap grinned and immediately launched into stories from the past week, most of which Dream had already heard about during their late-night phone calls. Still, there was something nice about watching the way Sapnap’s eyes lit up when he described Karl holding his hand for the first time, or the giddy edge to his voice when he explained how Karl squealed when Sapnap surprised him by buying some of his favourite nail varnish colours.

“He painted my nails again,” Sapnap said, splaying his hands out for Dream to see.

Dream smiled, glancing down. “Not black this time?”

“No, I wanted to try some other colours.”

“Looks good.”

“Thanks.” Sapnap hovered at Dream’s shoulder while he cooked, avoiding his eyes. “I really like him.”

Dream chuckled. “I gathered that. You don’t normally call me freaking out in the middle of the night unless it’s over something important.”

Sapnap shoved him lightly. “Yeah, but I - I *really* like him. Like, a lot. Almost too much.”

Dream cast a quick look over his shoulder, noting the way Sapnap fidgeted, eyes fixed on the counter. He thought about how he felt when George smiled at him on video call, his red thread visible on his left hand, and his heart squeezed.

“Yeah, I get it,” Dream said softly.

Sapnap smiled at him - genuine for once, not teasing or joking. “I can’t wait for you to finally meet Karl. We need to get George to Florida *fast*, I’m so excited to finally leave this house with you and I’m convinced we’re all gonna be soulmates.”

Dream nodded vigorously, turning back to cooking. “Yeah, I’m really hoping it won’t take too much longer. We sent all the extra evidence in two days ago - my mom was *amazing*, she gathered testimonials from all my family members who were there that day, plus printouts from all the forum posts and reports she’s made over the years. They *can’t* keep George away from me when they’ve seen all of that.”

“They won’t,” Sapnap said bracingly. “You’ll see. We’ll have him here with us in no time - Dream Team house for real!”

“I really hope so,” Dream said quietly, staring into the depths of the frying pan. The distance from George gaped wider than ever, a growing chasm ever since he’d discovered that George was on the other end of his red thread. And yet, the more Dream thought about actually having George right in front of him, the more impatient he became.

“Where is George, anyway?” Sapnap asked. “I thought he’d be part of my welcome-home committee.”

Dream snorted. “You were gone for a *week*.”

“Yeah, but still, I missed you guys! I can’t wait until all four of us can hang out together.”

Dream grinned at the thought. “Me too. George is with Wilbur and Tommy today, he said he’d be on later to test out his new plugin though.”

“He’s hanging out with Wilbur and Tommy and you’re... okay with that?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

Sapnap raised a brow.

“Well, okay.” Dream scoffed, narrowing his eyes. “I might have been a *bit* jealous before—”

“A *bit*?!?”

“—But now I know that George is mine, I don’t care,” Dream finished with a firm nod. “Besides, he said this is probably one of the last chances he’ll have to properly hang out with them before he moves, because as soon as his visa arrives I’m buying him plane tickets.”

Sapnap grinned. “You don’t care, huh.”

“I don’t.”

“Sure.”

“I don’t!” Dream insisted, shooting Sapnap a quick glare. “Don’t look at me like that. It’s good that George has other friends.”

“I know that,” Sapnap said, his eyes dancing with amusement. “It’s just funny, watching you try and convince yourself you aren’t a possessive jerk.”

Dream flicked a stray piece of chicken at him and went back to cooking, ignoring the way Sapnap shrieked dramatically behind him. He really couldn't wait until George was finally here, in the kitchen with them, laughing at Dream's ridiculousness or competing with Sapnap over something silly, like which one of them could get something down from the top shelf the fastest.

Soon, he promised himself, and focused on the food.

Two agonisingly slow weeks passed before Dream finally got the text he'd been waiting for.

He was busy editing a video in the office - he'd gone on a bit of a rampage over the past week or so, coercing George and Sapnap into hours of filming with him so they'd have a decent backlog of content to rely on when George finally arrived in Florida. Dream wanted to be able to truly enjoy having him here in person without stressing over a content drought, so prefilming seemed like the sensible solution.

He was scrolling through the music options trying to decide which would fit best for the new My Friend Is video he'd filmed with George the day before (which George should be editing but somehow here Dream was), when his phone buzzed with a new snapchat notification.

Dream dragged his brain out of editing mode and glanced down, frowning when he saw a notification from George. George was busy with his sister today - the realisation that these could be his last few days in the UK seemed to have sunk in for George, and he was making time to go outside and see the people most important to him. He'd hung out with his parents the day before, but that didn't go too well, so he was spending time with his sister alone today.

Dream opened the picture, confused when all he saw was a photo of a brown envelope sitting on what he recognised as George's kitchen counter.

Dream: ?????

George: *Hold on idiot*

Another picture came through seconds after the message, this time of the opened envelope with a stack of white papers pulled half-out. Dream squinted, unable to make out what it said, the letters too small and blurry.

Dream: *What am I looking at??*

George: *Hold on! You're ruining it*

Dream obediently sat still, confused beyond belief, when another picture came through a few minutes later. This time, the stack of papers were spread out on the table, and George had zoomed in on the first page enough for the words to be decipherable.

Dream's stomach dropped at what he read.

It was a letter - a letter addressed to George from the American Immigration office. The first line mentioned a visa application.

The second line said it had been approved.

Dream shrieked.

He yelled so loud he startled Patches, brown fluff leaping off the couch and streaking out of the office in the corner of his eye. He didn't care, too busy staring at his phone in utter disbelief, his heart pounding beneath his ribs.

Another photo came through, this time of a green card with George's photo and the words PERMANENT RESIDENT printed across the top.

Dream screeched so loud his throat hurt. He slammed his fist into his desk, the room spinning around him as he leaped to his feet, definitely standing up too fast after hours staring at his computer screen. Distantly, he heard a crash and a vague cry.

A discord notification sounded from his computer. George was in the voice channel.

Dream joined him in seconds, almost simultaneously with Sapnap. The three of them started yelling at the same time, talking over each other in their excitement, and Dream could hardly *believe* what he was seeing as he stared at the photo still open on his phone.

A green card with George's name on it.

"It's here!" George shouted, his voice thick in a way that sounded like he'd been crying. "It's here, I'm really - I can really come to America!"

"FUCKING FINALLY!" Sapnap roared so loud Dream could hear him down the corridor. "It's taken long enough - I've gotta text Karl, he's gonna *freak out*."

"Him? What about me!" George yelled. "*I'm* freaking out! I can't believe you'd go straight to your boyfriend over me at a time like this."

"You've got your own boyfriend right here!" Sapnap pointed out, and Dream jolted, realising a) that meant *him* and b) he should probably say something other than inarticulate screeching.

In the end, the only thing he could manage was: "*George!*"

"Dream," George said, his grin obvious in his voice. There was a tremor hidden behind his words, and Dream wouldn't be surprised if he was still shedding a few tears. "I've got a fucking green card."

"*George,*" Dream said, so happy he felt like he might just melt into a puddle right there on his bedroom floor. He sank back into his desk chair, fingers trembling as they shifted over his keyboard, saving his work and closing out of his editing program in favour of opening up a new internet tab. "I'm buying plane tickets. Like, right now."

George burst out laughing, and yep, he was definitely still crying, his voice hoarse and croakier than it should be. "Can you get them for tonight?"

"Watch me." Dream swallowed around the jagged lump in his throat, shaking so much he had to correct typos three times before hitting enter.

"George does actually have to pack, remember," Sapnap chimed in with a quiet laugh.

"No I don't," George disagreed. "I can leave everything here and make Dream buy me shit when I get to Florida."

Sapnap snorted. "True."

Dream didn't bother to deny it, too busy scrolling through flight times and seat availability, his heart pounding beneath his ribs. His usual common sense had flown out the window, desperation clawing under his skin. He needed George *here*, to finally touch him, to gather him into his arms and hold him close and feel the red thread tying them together tug against his finger.

"Besides, Tommy and Wilbur said they'd send my stuff on after me," George added. "And my sister offered to help, too. She was really happy for me today. She offered to pack up my boxes and forward them on, so I only really need, like, an overnight bag."

"Maybe a few nights," Dream said, biting his lip. "International shipping isn't instant."

"I can just steal your stuff until then."

Dream suppressed a giant grin, anticipation tingling under his skin. His vision blurred, the computer screen glistening, and when he blinked a single tear fell down his cheek. Dream swallowed, his throat dry, and reached for a bottle of water.

George could *be here*. Soon. *Really* soon.

"Are you crying?" George cooed. "Is he actually crying? Sapnap, go check on him."

Down the hall, Dream heard a door open and footsteps come rushing towards him, and then Sapnap poked his head into the office. He took one look at Dream sitting at his desk with tears rolling down his cheeks and cracked a giant grin.

Dream sniffled and held out his arms.

"You big baby," Sapnap teased, rushing forward and pulling Dream up into a hug. Dream wobbled to his feet, tugging Sapnap close against his chest and sniffling into his hair.

"George is gonna *be here*."

"Yeah, idiot," George said in his headphones, laughter bubbling in his voice. "Finally."

"Finally," Dream agreed, pushing out of Sapnap's hold and turning back to his computer screen. "We need to - to figure out logistics, but my brain doesn't seem to be working properly right now? There's a *lot* of flights and I keep scrolling..."

"Come here," Sapnap chuckled, nudging Dream out of the way so he could take his seat at the desk. "Of course you've already started searching, wow."

"Good," George said haughtily in Dream's headphones. Dream reached over and unplugged them so Sapnap could hear him too, just in time for him to say, "Dream's always been the most organised. I'm not leaving my fate in the hands of *Sapnap*."

"Hey!" Sapnap huffed, indignant. "You could buy your *own* plane tickets, spoiled baby."

"I could, but I'm scared that if I look away for even a second then this green card is gonna disappear from my hands."

"Green card," Dream said, folding his long limbs onto the couch and not bothering to hide his giant grin. "You've got a green card."

"Yeah." George laughed, relief obvious in his tone. "You can't get rid of me now."

"Gotta get you here first," Sapnap said, scrolling through flight options. His phone buzzed noisily

against the office desk. “Oh, that’s Karl - he just sent a bunch of celebratory emojis.”

“Tell him he’d better get down to Florida once I’m there,” George said. “I want to meet *everyone*. Tell Quackity too, we’ve even got the spare room he can stay in.”

“Spare room?” Dream asked, confused.

“Well, yeah, seeing as I won’t need it now.”

All Dream’s thoughts screeched to a halt. He dug his fingers into his sweatpants, struggling to connect the dots - for all he’d joked with George about them sharing a bed when George finally arrived, he’d somehow not managed to realise how *close* that reality was.

George in his bed. George in his arms. George, *his* and *here*.

It felt too good to be true.

“Okay, so there are like, legit flights for tomorrow,” Sapnap was saying, his voice fuzzy in Dream’s ears. “But isn’t that a bit crazy? You can’t really upend your life overnight, can you?”

“Why not?” George demanded. “It’s like, a 10 hour flight, right?”

“9 hours and 20 minutes.”

“So even if I leave tomorrow, it’ll still basically be two full days until I actually get there.” George was pouting - Dream could hear it in his tone, his chest fizzing with warmth. “Are you sure there aren’t any that leave tonight?”

“They’re all fully booked. Even the ones leaving tomorrow are ridiculously expensive.”

“That doesn’t matter,” Dream heard himself say, zoning back in on Sapnap. “I’ll pay anything to get George here as soon as he wants.”

George hummed. “Yeah, so buy the first tickets available, Sapnap.”

Sapnap raised a brow, shooting Dream a look. “Are you sure? Aren’t there, like - things we need to organise?”

“*No*,” George huffed, impatient, but Dream took a second to properly consider the question, trying to think with his head and not just his heart.

“Okay, so,” Dream started slowly, taking note of the way they both stopped talking to focus solely on what he had to say. Dream always had been the organiser between them. “We’ve already got George a place to stay, and we can buy anything essential here. He’ll need a computer setup, but we can get that easily enough and he can use the one in the office until then.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” George said impatiently. “You bought me my current setup anyway, Dream. It’s not like I need one right this second, and I said I’d give Tommy my monitors when I move. Him and Wilbur can send on anything I really need from here.”

“Okay,” Sapnap said slowly. “So I guess George just needs, like - clothes and shit?”

“Which I can easily fit in one suitcase,” George complained. “Buy the tickets already.”

“George, are you *sure*?” Dream asked, heart in his mouth. “You’re moving your whole life halfway across the world.”

“Yes, and I’ve been preparing for this for the better part of a year, Dream. Buy me my fucking plane tickets.”

Dream let out a surprised laugh, hardly believing his ears. He’d never deny George what he wanted, though, so he dug in his pocket for his wallet and handed his card over to Sapnap.

Sapnap grinned at him. “We’re doing this?”

“We’re doing this,” Dream confirmed. “Better start packing, George.”

George cheered so loud that Dream’s speakers crackled. Sapnap joined in, reading off the plane times like some game show host, inputting George’s details so that he’d get the confirmation email and all the details he needed while George rushed about his apartment dragging his suitcase out of the top of his wardrobe and hunting through his most essential items.

Dream listened to the chaos with a growing lump in his throat, his pulse thudding in his ears. George would be with him in less than forty-eight hours.

Turned out that pure joy felt a lot like walking on air.

The morning that George was due to arrive, Dream flapped around the house like an unfiltered hurricane.

Sapnap reclined on the couch and watched with raised brows as Dream walked in circles, rushing from the kitchen to the coffee table up to his bedroom and out to the backyard in an effort to make everything *perfect*.

What he was actually doing was creating more mess, seeing as he’d get halfway through bringing dirty dishes into the kitchen only to spot that the bins needed taking out, abandoning old mugs and empty plates in the middle of the counter in favour of dragging the trash outside.

George was already in the air. He’d boarded the flight in the middle of the night Florida time, on call with Dream until the very last second when he’d had to turn his phone off. Dream had tried to sleep after that, tossing and turning restlessly in his blankets until the nerves creeping under his skin had him jumping out of bed and setting off on yet another cleaning mission, completing all the tasks running through his head to make their home as welcoming to George as possible.

On a whim, he’d thrown all his sheets in the laundry, seeing as his bed would no longer just be *his*. In a fit of uncertainty, he’d texted George, glad that the flight had wifi and they could keep messaging even if they couldn’t call, because the only person able to calm Dream’s nerves when he was like this was George.

Dream: *Are you sure you wanna share my bedroom with me? We do still have yours if you’d prefer, I won’t be offended*

George: *Lmao*

Dream: *???*

George: *You’re an idiot*

Dream: *I still don’t know if I’m setting up the spare room or not*

George: Don't <3

Dream bit his inner cheek so hard when he read that message that the tangy taste of blood burst across his tongue. George followed it up with a long text about how annoying the woman sitting next to him was because she had a bag too big to fit into the overhead lockers and kept whacking it into his knees, and Dream laughed, distracted from his anxiety for a few minutes.

When Sapnap surfaced in the morning, Dream was mid-scrubbing the kitchen counters. He'd just taken in the situation with a blank look, then pointedly removed the bleach from the cupboards on his way to get his breakfast and refused to tell Dream where he'd hidden it. Ever since, he'd taken up a seat on the couch, watching as Dream darted about the house in a tornado of nerves.

"You're a wreck, huh," Sapnap said while Dream sat in the middle of the rug, untangling the wires behind their TV.

Dream shot him a glare. "It has to be *perfect*."

"Were you like this when I moved in?"

"Yeah." Dream sighed, focusing on the stubborn knot between the PS5 cable and the TV. "George made me take a nap while you were driving."

Sapnap pursed his lips. "...Do you need a nap now?"

"I can't *sleep*, Nick."

"You're a wreck." Sapnap kicked his feet up on the footstool, petting Patches where she lay curled up on his lap.

Dream didn't bother to deny it. He sat back on his knees after he finally managed to untangle the wires, pulling his phone out of his pocket and opening up the app he'd downloaded to track the plane's progress. George hadn't messaged in a couple of hours, claiming he was going to try and nap, so Dream resisted the urge to spam his texts and left him alone.

The plane was still on course, though a little amber warning appeared at the top of the screen: *potential delays due to bad weather*. Dream bit his lip. December weather could be unpredictable, sure, but he needed George to *be here already*.

"His flight might get delayed," Dream announced, chewing on his lower lip while he studied the app, as if new information might appear the longer he stared at it.

Sapnap frowned. "Did he tell you that?"

"No, it's on the tracking page." Dream showed Sapnap his screen, fingers drumming impatiently against his thigh. "That's gonna throw everything out if he's late - I had plans for dinner and my mom wants to see him tomorrow, though I did warn her the jetlag might be hell and he could just want to sleep for the first—"

"Clay," Sapnap cut him off, giving him a hard look. "Stop freaking out."

Dream grimaced. "How?"

"Give me your phone, for starters."

Dream jerked, clutching his phone close to his chest. "What?"

“You’re going to obsess over that app if I let you,” Sapnap said bluntly, holding out a hand.
“Gimme. George is sleeping, but if he wakes up and starts messaging I’ll let you have it back.”

Dream narrowed his eyes. “I *need* it.”

“Why?”

Dream clicked his tongue. “So I can prepare. We need to know what time he’s due in, there’s *so much to do* still.”

“The house is literally gleaming,” Sapnap said, raising a brow. “I have never seen it this clean.”

“But—”

“But nothing. Give. Me. Your. Phone.”

Reluctantly, Dream handed it over, physically pained as he watched Sapnap slide it into his own pocket.

“You can have it back when George wakes up,” Sapnap explained, patting the seat beside him.
“Now, we’re going to watch a movie, and you’re going to try and relax.”

“But what if he—”

“He’s literally asleep right now,” Sapnap interrupted. “And I’m the one going to get him from the airport anyway. You don’t even need to know when he lands.”

Dream let out a betrayed cry.

“Don’t worry, kidding,” Sapnap soothed, patting the seat beside him again. “Come and cuddle with Patches and let me distract you, we’ve got hours to go.”

Dream grumbled under his breath, but obediently left the rest of the wires and flopped down on the couch beside Sapnap. He did feel a little better when Patches immediately clambered onto his lap, her gentle purring helping him settle as he ran gentle fingers through her soft fur.

Sapnap nudged his shoulder while he turned on the TV. “Want to put on a movie or watch me play Pokemon for a bit?”

Dream slid down the sofa, thinking about it. “Watch you play.”

“Sounds good.” Sapnap reached over to grab the games console, saying nothing when Dream tipped sideways to rest his head against Sapnap’s shoulder. Dream didn’t care about Pokemon much, but listening to the familiar sounds of Sapnap complaining over the pleasant music and gorgeous graphics had Dream relaxing. He closed his eyes.

When he next stirred, another hour had passed and George’s flight would have been nearing its landing time, if it hadn’t been delayed. Sapnap refused to give him his phone back, though, insisting that he was on it and Dream didn’t need to worry about a thing.

“In fact, I’m kicking you out,” Sapnap said, folding his arms and staring Dream down in the hallway.

Dream narrowed his eyes. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Try me,” Sapnap threatened. “Go to the store and pick up some of George’s favourite treats. I’ll

watch your phone for you.”

“But what if he—”

“The second he messages, I will let you know,” Sapnap said, shooing Dream towards the door.
“Out, now. You’re upsetting Patches.”

Dream bit his lip, looking past Sapnap to where Patches was watching him from her place curled up on the couch. Sapnap had a point - Dream had tidied the house to the point of sterilisation, and all that was left to do was tear his hair out or start climbing the walls. Perhaps it wouldn’t hurt to buy George some of his favourite snacks from the store.

Dream deflated. “I guess we do need apple juice for him.”

“There you go!” Sapnap blocked the entry back into the living room, folding his arms. “Get some chips while you’re at it, and we’re nearly out of milk.”

“He likes tea, too,” Dream decided, turning to pull his shoes on. “Do they even sell good British tea here? I should have looked, what if he misses home?”

“This is his home,” Sapnap reminded him. “He’s gonna love it. He’s also gonna love you, so stop freaking out.”

Dream squinted at Sapnap. “Do I need to remind you how terrified you were to go meet Karl for the first time?”

“I wasn’t as bad as you.”

Dream hesitated, nerves pooling in his gut. “...Are you sure he’s gonna like it here?”

Sapnap’s expression softened. He took a step closer and tugged Dream into a hug - unusual, seeing as Dream was usually the one to initiate physical affection between them. Dream was grateful for it, pulling Sapnap close and trying to settle the constant itch of anxiety hovering just under his skin.

“You are gonna be fine,” Sapnap told him firmly, pulling back after a long few seconds. “And so is he. Now go before I actually boot you out the door.”

Dream wheezed out a light laugh. He turned, pulling on his jacket and face mask and checking he had his wallet before he headed to the door. “You’re not gonna give me my phone back, are you?”

“Nope,” Sapnap said sweetly. “George’s flight was delayed, he’ll be a while yet. Get out of here.”

Dream grimaced, fumbling with the handle. On the doorstep, with chilly December wind ruffling his hair, he turned to glance over his shoulder. “Hey, Nick?”

“Hm?”

“Thanks.”

Sapnap gave him a giant grin. “Any time. Get out of here, loser.”

Dream laughed, stepping out onto the drive, and as soon as the door shut behind him he felt a weight lift off his shoulders. Sapnap was right - being outside would do him good. He could already feel his head clearing.

What he didn’t see was Sapnap letting out a giant sigh of relief as soon as he was gone. Sapnap cast

a furtive look at the doorway, then pulled out his own phone and jogged back into the living room, watching out the window as Dream wandered down the street.

He messaged George while he waited.

Sapnap: *He's gone. When will you be done with baggage claim?*

George: *20 minutes, don't be late loser*

Sapnap: *omw now*

George: *If Dream's mad I'm telling him this was your idea*

Sapnap: *Lmao go ahead. You'll thank me later when you see his face*

Sapnap: *See you in 20 baby <3 Welcome home*

George: :]

The store was surprisingly busy for a Thursday afternoon. The schools were all closed for winter break, so Dream had to dodge several screaming kids and exhausted-looking parents while he wandered around the aisles picking up anything he thought might look appealing to George.

He ended up with a lot more items in his basket than he'd planned, but he didn't mind. Spoiling George was one of his favourite activities, he might as well start as he meant to go on. The red thread on his ring finger itched, starting to tug against his skin, the knot tightening around his knuckle. Dream drew in a deep breath. George's flight must be getting close.

Standing at the checkout while he waited for the payment to go through, Dream adjusted his face mask, glad that no one would know who he was as long as he didn't speak. He wouldn't have this anonymity for too much longer, not once he'd face revealed when George arrived, and he'd kind of miss it. He was looking forward to finally being able to leave the house with his friends, though.

Once his card was accepted, Dream packed the items up into a bag - he should have thought to bring his backpack, but Sapnap shepherded him out the door before he had a chance - and headed back onto the street, air cold against his face. He wished he had his headphones, but Sapnap refused to relinquish his phone, which meant no Spotify for him. He tipped his head back, enjoying the sun in the cloudless sky on the walk back to the house.

As he approached the drive, he noticed that Sapnap's car wasn't parked in the same place it had been when Dream left. He paused, frowning. He could have sworn Sapnap's car was beside his on the driveway earlier, but now it was parked by the sidewalk, pulled up half-on the curb. Dream shook his head. He must be imagining things.

He fit his key into the lock and stepped inside, almost dropping the bag when a sudden sharp tug pulled at his ring finger. Dream yelped. He stumbled against the wall, splaying his left hand out in front of him and watching as his red thread pulled taut, the knot tightening around his skin.

From the living room, he heard a soft groan.

"Nick?" Dream called, confused. He adjusted the bag and kicked his shoes off, ambling into the living room. "I couldn't find any decent British tea, that store sucks. They also only had one brand of apple juice, I swear if George doesn't like it I'm gonna file a complaint. Have you heard from..."

him...?"

Dream looked up and trailed off, jerking back as if he'd been punched.

There, sitting on his couch, was George.

George. On his couch.

George.

Dark eyes under too-long hair stared up at him, slender fingers gently stroking brown fur where Patches was curled up on his lap. An oversized white sweater, too hot for the Floridian climate, hung over most of his hands, bunching in his lap over black sweatpants clearly worn for comfort on a long flight rather than fashion.

The red thread around Dream's finger pulled *tight*. They both winced.

George, in his living room. George, sitting right where Dream had flopped against Sapnap earlier, taking up most of the couch for himself. George, staring at him with his mouth shaped like an o, pure astonishment written all over his face.

Dream dropped his bag. It crashed into the aching silence like a stone tossed to the bottom of a lake, ripples spreading.

Slowly, George's eyes dragged down Dream's body, drinking him in. A giant grin spread across his face, eyes scrunching up in the way Dream had seen a million times through a phone screen, but it was a thousand times better in real life.

"Sup," George said, beaming.

Dream could have cried. Instead, he found himself frozen to the spot, staring at George with his mouth hanging open, physically incapable of moving.

A rustle behind him announced Sapnap's presence. He chuckled. "Oh, look. Dream.exe has stopped responding."

George's eyes drifted past Dream, focusing somewhere over his shoulder, before he zoned back in on Dream's face. "I told you he'd freak out."

Dream drew in a shuddering breath, hardly able to believe he was hearing George's voice *in person*, crisp and clear with no crackly audio or shitty wifi connection. His brain wasn't supplying him with thoughts: just a series of exclamation marks.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"Woah, dude." A clap to his shoulder made Dream jolt back to life, whipping his head around to find Sapnap standing next to him. He arched a brow. "Are you... actually okay?"

"Told you he'd be speechless," George said, smug. Dream's eyes jumped back to George like a reflex - *George, on his couch* - studying the proud glint in his dark eyes, his fingers stroking through Patches' fur in a smooth glide. Dream zeroed in on his hands, noting briefly the brand new yellow thread he could see tying George to Sapnap, before his gaze darted to George's ring finger.

The red thread around his hand tugged hard.

"You—!" Dream managed finally, his voice a choked rasp. "You - you're - *George!*"

"Well, yeah." George grinned, amused. He stared up at Dream with something close to awe hiding behind his confident facade. He gestured to Patches in his lap. "I'd hug you, but, uh. Your cat is kinda attached to me."

"I can't believe she's on your lap already," Sapnap complained, folding his arms. "It took me a month before she even let me pet her."

"I knew she'd love me," George chuckled, scratching behind her ear. His gaze darted up to Dream's again, his eyes going wide. "Or... or, Dream said she would. And he's usually right."

Dream swallowed, his throat closing around a jagged lump. He still couldn't formulate words.

Silence held for an agonising few seconds.

"I think we did actually break Dream," Sapnap commented, tilting his head, just as Dream finally managed to unstick his feet and burst into movement.

Kicking the bag out of the way, Dream strode across the living room and reached for George, barely registering the startled look that flitted across his face before he was pulling him up and into his arms. George squawked, overbalancing, Patches leaping off his lap with a loud meow and streaking across the living room without a second glance.

The hug was clumsier than Dream planned - and he'd thought about this, god he'd thought about this - but then again, he thought he'd have time to prepare, not that the two little shits he called his best friends would have pranked him like this. He pulled George ferociously into his chest, ignoring the way George had to cling onto him to stop them both from toppling over, and squeezed him tight, burying his face in George's hair.

As soon as they touched, the knot around Dream's ring finger pulled impossibly tight, threading them together forever.

A muffled gasp against his chest told Dream that George felt it, too. That was all the confirmation he needed to know that George really, truly *was* his romantic soulmate, but just in case it wasn't enough he could see the red thread tying them together in its entirety, tangled around their wrists and arms to lock them together.

Dream pressed his face into George's hair and breathed him in, delighting in his subtle scent, muted from hours on a plane. George laughed, shoulders shaking in Dream's arms. A closed fist tapped against Dream's ribs. "Let me go, idiot, I can't breathe."

"No," Dream said stubbornly, closing his eyes and locking his arms tight around George.

"*Dream—*"

"I just need to—" Dream pulled back, holding George at arm's length and studying him. His eyes burned hot when George grinned at him, hair ruffled and happiness coming off him in waves. "—just need to check that you're real."

Just like that, George softened. He stepped close again, of his own volition this time, curling his hands into the front of Dream's jacket and tugging him forward. "I'm here, Clay. I'm real."

Dream trembled. He reached up to touch George's face, fingers trailing down his cheeks and up to his forehead, finally tangling in his hair. The strands were just as soft as he'd always imagined, if a little dry from the flight. "You're really—?"

“I’m here.” George broke out into a grin and stepped back just enough to dig into his pockets, surfacing with his green card. He held it up proudly. “See? You can’t get rid of me now.”

Dream started laughing. He stared at George with laughter bubbling up his throat, warmth filling his chest like a bird spreading its wings, flooding him right to the tips of his fingers and all the way down to his toes. He pulled George in again, still laughing, and cradled him against his chest, squeezing so hard that George let out a breathless *oof*.

“You’re gonna suffocate me, idiot.”

“Watch me.” Dream pressed his face back into George’s hair, clinging so tight that George’s feet actually left the floor for a second. George yelped, but he didn’t try to escape - in fact, he did the opposite, throwing his arms around Dream’s neck and burying his face in Dream’s shoulder.

“George,” Dream breathed, holding on with everything he had in case the precious cargo in his arms suddenly disappeared again.

George sighed, nuzzling into his collar. “Clay.”

The use of his real name just made everything feel that much more stark. Dream let out a long breath, feeling all the weight of his worries and fears over the past year disappear with the sensation of George finally pressed against him, warm and sturdy and so undeniably present that Dream’s brain was having trouble processing.

“I can’t believe you’re real,” Dream murmured, and felt rather than heard George chuckle.

“Yeah, I’m actually an actor you hired years ago. This has all been fake.”

“George.”

“Besides, you should *know* I’m real. We’ve met before, apparently.”

Dream shook his head, setting George back on his feet so he could inspect the red thread tying them together. George held up his left hand as soon as he saw what Dream was doing, reaching up with his right to tug gently on the thread. Dream winced at the resultant pull around his finger.

“It really is you, huh,” George murmured, staring at the knot around Dream’s ring finger.

“It’s me.” Dream grinned at him, running a hand through George’s hair - now he’d touched him, he didn’t know how he was supposed to *stop*, eager to keep up the physical contact between them as much as was humanly possible.

George blinked up at him, meeting his eyes, and Dream rocked to a standstill. The entire world shuddered to a halt around him, freezing in place for as long as George looked at him.

A small smile pulled at the corner of George’s mouth. He reached up to touch Dream’s cheek, light as anything, so fleeting that Dream might have thought he’d imagined it if it wasn’t for the heat spreading beneath his skin.

“Mystery red thread guy,” George said, his smile widening. “No wonder it’s you, really. Of course it’s you, who else could it have been?”

Dream let out a faint laugh. “I’d have liked to know a lot sooner. You’ve caused me so many problems over the years, do you know that?”

“Not nearly as many as you’ve caused me.” George pointed an accusing finger at Dream, but the amusement was obvious in the crinkling at the corner of his eyes. “You’ve given me *hell*. It’s a wonder I’m even here at all, considering everything you’ve put me through—”

“I’ve put *you* through?!”

“Yes, Dream. You’re a nightmare.”

“Me?” Dream said incredulously. “George, how *dare* you—”

“What have I said that’s not true?”

“Shut *up*.” Dream laughed, gathering George into his arms again. “You’re such an *idiot*, I don’t know why I thought that would be any different in person.”

Instead of fighting him, George just sort of - melted. He leaned into Dream, resting his head in the crook of Dream’s neck and clinging to the front of his jacket with small fists, and Dream didn’t have the heart to keep up a pretence. He hugged George close, murmuring, “I *missed* you.”

“Me too.” George sighed. “It’s good to be home.”

Home. The word dropped so easily from George’s lips, and Dream’s heart fluttered in his throat.

The sound of a throat clearing behind Dream interrupted them. Sapnap was leaning against the wall, Patches in his arms, watching them both with raised brows and a slightly cautious smile. “Should I, like - leave you guys alone?”

Dream shot him a sheepish grin, refusing to let George out of his arms.

“No, *no*, don’t you dare!” George wriggled, trying to battle free and eventually settling for twisting most of the way towards Sapnap with Dream hanging onto his waist. “You’re not allowed to leave yet either, you’re my *soulmate*. Look!” He held up his left hand, proudly displaying the brand new yellow thread tied to his middle finger.

Dream followed the thread across the room to Sapnap, pleased he could see both ends as he was already soulmates with both of them. “When did this happen?”

“At the airport,” George said happily. “*Show him*, Nick, c’mon.”

Sapnap grinned and held up his left hand, his middle finger now knotted with two yellow threads - one tying him to Dream, the other to George.

“I have four now,” George said, tone almost disbelieving. He splayed both hands out in front of him, admiring the threads tied to his fingers. “*Four soulmates*. And I actually know who you all are! This is the best feeling in the universe.”

Dream choked up when he realised how new this must all be for George - he’d grown up with no one, after all, just a mystery stranger tied to the other end of his red thread. Until a few months ago, he never knew what it felt like to be threaded to another person in the same room as him.

Dream reached down and grabbed George’s hand in his, holding on tight. George startled, glancing up at him, but Dream was already turning towards Sapnap and reaching out with his other hand, beckoning him closer.

Sapnap laughed, crossing the room in seconds. “Dream team cuddle pile?”

“Dream team cuddle pile,” Dream confirmed, slightly embarrassed when his voice shook. He gathered both of them into his arms, pulling them close, delighted at how they were both practically the same height and just barely came up to his shoulders. He could tuck them both under his arms easily.

Sapnap elbowed him, juggling Patches while George melted into his side. He watched as Sapnap and George linked hands on their other side, the three of them clinging to each other so tightly that Dream never wanted to let go, even if it was too warm and sticky and Patches yowled when she was squished between them.

“Welcome home, George,” Sapnap said, joyful.

“Yeah,” Dream added quietly, squeezing them both against him. “Welcome home.”

George made a muffled sound, a laugh mixed with something that might have been the beginnings of a sob, but for once, neither of them teased him about it. They just held each other tight, basking in each other’s presence, and Dream closed his eyes and wished for this moment to never end.

“...so I sent you out to the store, knowing you’d be gone for a while if I told you to pick up some things for George, which gave me enough time to drive to the airport and pick George up before he was finished with baggage claim.”

Dream hummed, listening absent-mindedly while Sapnap rambled. The three of them were sprawled out on the couch, Dream propped up against the armrest with George settled comfortably between his spread legs. On the other end, Sapnap lay spread-eagled against the cushions, his feet tossed across George’s lap. Patches was squished between Sapnap and George, both of them taking it in turns to pet her.

True to his word, Dream hadn’t stopped touching George once. He currently had his fingers in George’s hair, playing with the short strands and lightly scratching at his scalp while George melted into his chest, eyes half-closed, sleepy from his long flight.

“I’m still kinda amazed we made it back in time,” Sapnap said, grinning over at Dream. “You were out for a while.”

“They didn’t have the right kind of apple juice,” Dream mumbled, all his attention focused on George.

Sapnap snorted. “You were spoiling him even when he’d just landed.”

“As he should,” George sniffed, tipping his head back into Dream’s touch.

Sapnap rolled his eyes.

Dream smiled, dragging his nails across George’s scalp and watching as George’s eyes fluttered shut under his touch. His other hand was wound around George’s waist, cradling him close, delighting in the solid warmth of him, sturdy and firm and *present*.

Then something registered and he frowned, glaring at Sapnap. “Wait. George had already landed when you sent me to the store?”

“Yeah,” Sapnap confirmed. “Baggage claim takes forever though, I knew I probably had enough time to get there before he was free to leave.”

Dream gaped, betrayed. “You sent me to the store and stole my phone when you *knew George was in the country*?!”

“You were freaking out, Dream, I had to stage an intervention.”

George chuckled. “Dream was freaking out, huh?”

“Shut up,” Dream muttered, carding his fingers through George’s hair. “Go back to sleep.”

“M’not *sleepy*.”

“Sure.” Dream rolled his eyes, focusing back on Sapnap. “I only let you take my phone because you said his flight was delayed!”

“I lied,” Sapnap shrugged, his grin wicked.

Dream huffed. “I am never trusting you again.”

“Come on, it was so worth it, though,” Sapnap laughed. “You should have seen your face. I thought you were going to pass out.”

“I said you were gonna lose your shit,” George said proudly, his voice thick with sleep.

“Yeah, yeah, congratulations.” Dream shook his head, impossibly fond. “You got me good, both of you. I’m still mad.”

“Serves you right for hanging up on me when you met Nick for the first time,” George mumbled.

Dream levelled him with a glare. “You’re never gonna let that go, are you?”

“Never in a million years.” George opened one eye, peering up at Dream with a disgruntled look. “Give me back your hand.”

Dream lifted a brow, but immediately went back to stroking George’s hair. George let out a content sigh.

Sapnap’s phone buzzed against the coffee table, disturbing the peaceful air that settled over the three of them. Sapnap groaned, making grabby hands for it, clearly not bothered enough to reach over and pick it up properly. Dream stretched out a leg and kicked it across the table towards him.

Sapnap caught it just before it shot off the edge, giving Dream a two-fingered salute. “Thanks.”

“Shh, don’t wake the baby.” Dream grinned, gesturing to George, who pinched his thigh in retaliation without opening his eyes.

“Heard that.”

Sapnap ignored them both, scrolling through his phone with a small smile. “It’s Karl. He wants to know when he can come visit, and he says congratulations on finally bringing George home.”

“Ooh, *Karl*,” George mumbled, aiming for teasing but failing miserably due to the obvious fatigue weighing him down.

Dream chuckled. He gazed adoringly down at the top of George’s head, marvelling at how this person had travelled thousands of miles just to be with them, only to then promptly fall fast asleep in the lap of someone he’d just met in person less than an hour ago.

Not that Dream was complaining. He'd gladly let George fall asleep on him every day for the rest of their lives.

"Can I tell him yes?" Sapnap's voice interrupted Dream's thoughts, and he looked up to find Sapnap squinting at him. "Karl, I mean. I can tell him to come visit, right?"

"Yeah, of course." Dream smiled, going back to stroking George's hair. "Tell him to come any time next month. I'm gonna face reveal sometime this week, once we've had a chance to settle in."

"Do it on my stream," George muttered. "Give me all the views."

Dream snorted. "Whatever you say."

"How *do* you want to handle the internet?" Sapnap asked without looking up, busy typing on his phone. "Everyone's still freaking out about whether or not you guys are soulmates, and no one even knows George is in Florida."

"I had an idea about that, actually."

"Of course you did," George snorted, curling his hand into Dream's thigh - the closest bit of Dream he could reach without having to move much. "Tell us the plan, Dream. Do you have a spreadsheet to show us?"

Dream rolled his eyes and ruffled George's hair, ignoring his annoyed huff. "Don't be an idiot. I just thought it would be nice to show everyone that we're soulmates, right? But I don't want to face reveal quite yet, so I figured we could take a picture of our hands and do it that way, for today at least."

Sapnap squinted at him. "But no one else will be able to see our threads - apart from, like, Karl, and Tommy and Wilbur I guess?"

"We can draw them in," Dream explained. "I did it for George a while back - just colour over where the threads are so we can show everyone how we're connected. It'll tell them that George is here, too, and we can caption it saying we're going to be taking a short break while we adjust to everything. We have enough content pre-filmed to last for a couple of weeks."

"Ugh, you're so organised." George rolled over, pressing his face into Dream's chest. "No wonder you're the famous one out of the three of us."

Dream felt hot, his face flushing. "I'm not really. All of us stream."

"Dude, don't be modest." Sapnap yawned into his fist, holding out his phone. "We're all here because of you."

George mumbled an affirmative into Dream's shirt.

Dream ducked his head, hiding a bashful smile. He was eternally grateful to the two of them for following him into the world of internet stardom, for better or for worse - sometimes, he wondered if he'd made the wrong choices over the past couple of years, but sitting here with George in his lap and Sapnap flopped opposite them, it was hard to remember why.

"Gimme your hands, then." Sapnap held up his phone, opening up the camera. "Let's get this over with."

"Right now?" George asked, blearily opening one eye.

Dream cooed. “Don’t worry, George, you don’t even have to be awake. I’ll hold your hand for you.”

“Good.” George closed his eyes again and shoved his left hand towards Dream. Dream laughed, fully in love with how endearing and demanding George was when he was exhausted, and gently took George’s hand in his, placing it down on the couch cushion with fingers splayed wide.

Sapnap laid his left hand down beside George’s, and finally Dream added his, captivated at the sight of the threads tangling them together. Sapnap pressed the button several times, capturing it from a few different angles, and then sent the pictures all across to Dream, quietly acknowledging that this should come from Dream’s account, seeing as he was the one who started all this.

Dream picked up his phone - returned to him after his initial shock over George’s appearance - and swiped through the photos, selecting the best one. He coloured over the threads - yellow linking himself and Sapnap, another yellow linking Sapnap and George, and then a beautiful red thread tying himself and George together. He captioned it simply enough - the threads told everyone what they needed to know - and then posted it to instagram and twitter, letting the fanbase do the rest.

Sapnap’s phone started buzzing with notifications mere seconds later. He grinned, scrolling through the replies while Dream tossed his phone down, too busy enjoying having George in his arms to focus on what his fans were thinking.

“Everyone is freaking out,” Sapnap said, amused. “Quackity’s yelling - Karl’s retweeted it with a smiley face, that’s so cute.”

“Yeah, you’re in love with him, we get it,” George mumbled.

Sapnap kicked him in the ankle, ignoring his yelp. “You have a *nerve* saying that when you’re literally falling asleep in Dream’s lap right now.”

“Dream, save me,” George complained, his tone veering on a whine.

Dream frowned at Sapnap. “Leave him alone, he’s tired.”

George stuck his tongue out.

Sapnap looked between them, shaking his head. “I’m so disappointed in both of you. In fact, I’m gonna go to bed - I need to call Karl anyway, I promised him I’d fill him in on your reaction when we snuck George into the house.”

“Even *Karl* knew?” Dream huffed, glaring.

Sapnap laughed. “I couldn’t resist, dude, your face was *priceless*. I got a picture.”

“You didn’t!”

“I did. Perfect blackmail fodder.” Sapnap stretched, clambering to his feet while taking extra care not to dislodge Patches. “You should get the baby up to bed before he completely passes out on the couch.”

“M’not a *baby*,” George whined, barely cracking his eyes open.

Dream laughed softly, wrapping both arms around George and holding him close. “I will.”

Sapnap nodded, yawning again while he rounded the couch and headed in the direction of the

kitchen, no doubt on the hunt for a late-night snack while he talked on the phone to Karl for hours. Dream would usually retreat to his own room for the same reason, desperate to catch George on discord before they both fell asleep on their phones, but he didn't need to anymore.

He could hardly believe that George was really here.

"C'mon," Dream murmured, nudging George in the ribs. "Let's go upstairs."

"Don't wanna. I'm comfy."

"You'll be more comfy upstairs, I promise," Dream persuaded, running his knuckles through George's hair and down the back of his head, resting against the nape of his neck. His skin was warm under Dream's touch.

George tipped his head back, groaning. "I don't think I can. I'm stuck."

"No, you're not."

"Am too." George cut himself off, yawning into his closed fist. His eyes scrunched up small before blinking open, tipping his head back to look at Dream upside-down.

Dream smiled like a reflex, impossibly fond.

"Don't you want to finally see my room?" he tried, trailing his fingers around the side of George's neck. "You've been talking about it for months."

George made a face. "First of all, that was mostly you."

"It was not!"

"You sent me snapchats from your bed."

"*You asked,*" Dream huffed, feeling hot.

George grinned at him, shifting upright so he could turn and meet Dream's gaze properly. Patches grumbled when he disturbed her. "Second of all, that sounds like stairs are involved, and stairs are the single worst invention known to mankind."

"You're exaggerating."

"It's the *truth*."

"You are so dramatic," Dream laughed, his chest fizzing with warmth, so full that he thought he might burst. He reached out for George, brushing his cheekbone with the pad of his thumb and delighting in the way George's eyes fluttered shut. "Come on, let's go. You'll be much happier when you can lie down properly."

George peered at him from under his too-long hair. "Are you finally gonna cuddle me to sleep?"

Dream suppressed a giant grin, trying to ignore the thud of his pulse in his ears. He thought he'd be more nervous the first time he brought George up to his room, but somehow he felt as though he'd done it a thousand times before - George had only just arrived, but he'd also been here all along. Everything about this felt familiar; comforting.

"I'll hold you for as long as you want me to," Dream promised, heart fluttering at the sleepy smile that earned him. "*If* you come to bed without any more complaints."

George screwed his face up. "Unfair."

"That's your offer. Take it or leave it."

"You're the worst," George announced, but he moved, finally dragging himself off the sofa and wobbling on his legs like a baby deer. He made grabby hands for Patches. "Bring her too, I want a family hug."

Dream wheezed out a laugh, but obediently bent down and scooped his cat into his arms, cradling her against his chest as he got to his feet. She immediately started purring, rubbing her head under his chin.

Sensing eyes on him, Dream glanced up to find George watching him with an expression so soft it almost hurt to look at. George didn't look away once Dream caught him staring, just continuing to study him, drinking in his features as if he'd never seen a human being before.

Dream felt a little self-conscious, unused to the scrutiny, but he couldn't have looked away even if he wanted to. George's dark eyes were captivating.

"You're really beautiful," George said bluntly, tilting his head. "You know that, right?"

Dream choked out a laugh. "Yeah, okay, you definitely need to go to sleep."

"No, no." George flapped a hand at him. "I mean, I do, but - but I find it easier to say honest things when I'm tired, so just - just - you're beautiful. Okay?"

Dream bit his lip, fighting back the warm smile that threatened to take over his face. George was looking at him so tenderly, as if Dream was the whole world, and Dream thought that he could conquer anything if George just kept looking at him like that.

"I just need you to know that," George murmured, taking a step closer. They'd been close already, but now there were mere inches between them, their chests only separated by Patches' purring little body.

George reached up to touch his face, and Dream froze.

Carefully, as if he was handling fragile glass, George cupped his hand over Dream's cheek, fitting his fingers against his skin. He leaned up on his tip-toes, bringing them closer to eye level, and Dream's heart tugged at how ridiculously endearing that was.

Then George was inching closer, closer still, until they were breathing the same air.

Dream's eyes fell closed. He tipped closer, felt rather than saw George lean in to meet him, and then their lips brushed in the faintest beginnings of a kiss.

Something electric tingled down Dream's spine. His fingers went slack around Patches' fur, his entire body burning up from the inside out when George fit their mouths together properly. It still wasn't a proper kiss, clumsy from the awkward angle with Patches squirming between them, but Dream couldn't have cared less. His entire world clicked into place the second George's lips met his.

George pulled back after a second, uncertain, and Dream moved before he could get too far. He deposited Patches somewhere on the couch, ignoring her disgruntled meow, and fit his fingers around George's face, drawing him close.

George came eagerly, reaching up to wrap his arms around Dream's neck, and Dream bent down to kiss him properly. They melted into each other, George letting out a little sigh against his lips, and Dream marvelled at how solid and warm George was, so undeniably present and perfect that he was in no doubt that this was real.

Kissing George was far better than anything his fantasies could conjure, anyway.

After a long few seconds - or minutes, or hours, Dream honestly couldn't have said - George pulled away to yawn, hiding his face in Dream's shoulder.

Dream laughed, cradling him close. "We're supposed to be getting you to bed."

"Yeah, but I..." George stifled another yawn, squeezing his eyes shut. "I couldn't go another second without knowing what that felt like."

Dream shook his head, fighting back a giant grin. "You can find out plenty tomorrow."

"I have to wait that long?"

"George," Dream said, fond but exasperated. "You're literally falling asleep standing up."

"I'm not," George immediately denied, forcing his eyes open. He tipped his head back, meeting Dream's gaze with a defiant expression. "I'm totally awake right now."

Dream rolled his eyes.

"I am! You're an idiot if you can't see it."

"Yeah, okay," Dream said, knowing better than to fight with an overtired George. He shuffled backwards, half-surprised when George clung to him, refusing to put any distance between them at all. George had said he was clingy, but Dream didn't quite believe it until he had George here, right in front of him where he belonged.

"Come on," Dream murmured, stroking a hand through George's hair. "Let's go to bed. I can cuddle you properly when I don't also have to support your entire body weight."

That seemed to placate George enough to convince him to move. With much cajoling, Dream managed to get them both up the stairs, Patches following behind them with her tail held high in the air. He deposited George in the bathroom, forcing him to change into his pyjamas, knowing he'd be much more comfortable in the morning if he hadn't slept in the same clothes he'd spent ten hours on a plane in.

When George finally stumbled into his bedroom, Dream took his own turn, washing his face and brushing his teeth before changing into his sleep shirt and sweatpants. Half of him wondered if he'd return to his bedroom to find that George was a figment of his imagination, disappearing just as suddenly as he'd arrived.

But when he crossed the hall and opened the door to his room, he found George curled up on his bed, petting Patches where she lay in a tight ball in her usual spot at his feet.

Dream broke into a soft smile without even realising it.

George blinked up at him when he heard the door snap shut, sleep-soft and gentle, his ruffled hair falling in his eyes. "Your bedroom is bigger than it looks on video call."

“You’re smaller than you look on video,” Dream responded, crossing the room to climb into the bed next to him.

George yelped and whacked him. “I am *not*.”

“You are. Look at you.” Dream captured one of George’s hands in his own, lining them up palm-to-palm, and grinned when his fingers engulfed George’s. “So small.”

“I’m taller than Sapnap.”

“That’s not hard.”

“He’s gonna *kill* you for saying that,” George snickered, meeting Dream’s eyes. Dream looked back at him, feeling a little like he’d been punched in the chest - every time he thought he was beginning to adjust to George’s physical presence, dark eyes would meet his and send him spiralling again.

George reached up with one casual hand, threading his fingers through Dream’s blond hair.
“You’ve got curls.”

“You knew that,” Dream said, falling completely still under the touch. “I’ve been video calling you for two weeks.”

“I’m still getting used to it.” George studied his features, gaze taking him apart and then piecing him back together again. Dream shivered under the intensity of that look.

“We should get some sleep,” Dream murmured, to break the tension and preserve his sanity more than anything. “My mom wants to meet you tomorrow, and she can be a bit much, let alone unleashing my sister on you.”

George broke into a warm smile. “I can’t wait to meet all of them.”

“Me too.”

George sighed, flopping down onto the pillows, and Dream immediately curled up beside him, gathering George into his arms. George rolled onto his side, nuzzling into Dream’s chest while Dream wrapped an arm around his shoulders and cradled him close.

“It’s so good to finally be here,” George murmured into Dream’s shirt. “With my people. I always wondered what it was like to have your soulmates there every day. Turns out it’s better than I ever imagined.”

Dream hummed, his heart aching at the thought of a lonely George growing up, trapped in England away from them all. “You’ve got us now.”

“I know.”

“And just you wait until we start meeting everyone else. Karl’s gonna be our soulmate, I’m convinced, and once I’ve face revealed we can hang out with all of them - Bad, Punz, Quackity—”

“Oh my god.” George giggled. “Imagine if you and Quackity are soulmates. He’s never gonna let you live it down.”

Dream groaned, imagining Quackity’s smug grin and yells of *I told you so* should that happen.
“He’s gonna be your soulmate, I’m pretty sure, and if he’s yours then I want him to be mine too.”

“Mm?”

“Yeah. All of your people should be mine too, that’s how I want this to work.”

George laughed lightly, curling into Dream’s side. “You’re possessive, huh.”

“You knew that.”

“I did.” George opened one eye, tilting his face up to meet Dream’s, and smiled so wide his cheeks lifted. “Hey, Dream.”

“Mm?”

“I’m really, really happy.” George’s smile widened, which shouldn’t be possible. So much joy was already contained in his expression that Dream wondered how one person could possibly glow like George did.

The light in the room.

Dream cuddled him close, dropping a kiss to the top of George’s head before he buried his face in his hair. “I’m happy too. I’m so happy you’re finally home.”

“Mm. Home.” George sighed, nestling into Dream’s chest and carving himself a permanent place there, etched onto Dream’s heart. “I like the sound of that.”

Dream’s heart fluttered beneath his ribs, the red thread around his ring finger pulling tight. He closed his eyes and allowed himself to hold George close, revelling in the feeling of finally having him in his arms.

That night was the first of many nights Dream fell asleep with George on his chest, Patches curled up by their feet. George was a wriggler, and he talked in his sleep and elbowed Dream in the ribs one time too many, but Dream wouldn’t have changed anything for the world.

When he woke the next morning to his face in George’s hair and George’s legs entangled with his, Dream knew he’d found his place. His home was George, and he’d never let anything separate them ever again.

THE END

End Notes

My [tumblr](#) and [twitter](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!